

## Camping Leader

### Guidance for course directors and staff

#### Introduction

- These guidance notes are designed to assist staff in the delivery of the Camping Leader assessment course. They should be used in conjunction with the Camping Leader candidate handbook and national Mountain Training organisation quality manual.
- The Camping Leader scheme is designed to train and assesses candidates in the skills required to supervise a camping group and teach campcraft activities. A qualified Camping Leader can operate in a variety of campsites, all with vehicular access, such as land with no facilities or commercial campsites offering a range of facilities. A qualified Camping Leader holding a Mountain Training walking leadership qualification can operate in terrain within the scope of that scheme.
- The qualification is aimed at lightweight camping where all equipment can be transported easily by person, or by transport such as a car, bicycle or canoe.
- Candidates are encouraged to complete the optional online e-learning module prior to attending their assessment. This highlights key elements of the syllabus that they should be aware of but is not a substitute for experience in core practical campcraft skills e.g. erecting a tent, using a stove etc.
- The assessment is run with a minimum of eight hours contact time<sup>1</sup>. Providers may deliver this over separate sessions.
- Assessors should set realistic tasks or scenarios rather than request specific techniques be demonstrated. Tasks set should not demand solutions that use techniques beyond the scope of the qualification. Assessment courses should facilitate open discussion.
- If assessment candidates are unable to demonstrate competence initially, other opportunities should be given where possible or appropriate.
- In conclusion, Camping Leader assessment courses are for participants with sufficient personal experience. While course staff should endeavour to maintain a safe working environment, participants also have a duty to exercise judgment regarding their own personal safety and that of other members of the group.

---

<sup>1</sup> Contact time definitive definition: Contact time refers to the time course staff spend interacting with candidates on a course:

- Covering the syllabus in a training or assessment capacity.
- Discussing tasks carried out independently (for example a home paper or planning exercise); and delivering feedback.

Contact time must be face to face, in person or online, for example using video conferencing software, and allow immediate response to questions and feedback. NOTE: Travel time, where candidates share transport, does not count towards contact time.

### **Candidate requirements**

It is important that candidates come well prepared and have completed all the prerequisites which are listed on the website. For the sake of clarity they are listed below. Candidates must:

- Be registered for the scheme on the Candidate Management System (CMS).
- Have personally undertaken and logged an absolute minimum of five overnight camps, ideally in a variety of contexts.
- Have assisted with or overseen at least two group camps. If personal camping has only been undertaken when also supervising a group, then these two group camps can be part of the total submitted for personal camping i.e. some candidates may need to log only five overnight camps in total. Reflective comments must accompany the group supervision evidence.
- Be familiar with the syllabus.
- Be an experienced self-sufficient camper.
- Have experience of the supervision of camping groups.
- Be at least 18 years old.
- Have completed an appropriate first aid course. They must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least one full day or eight hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.

### **Course size**

Min. course size: 2

Max. course size: 12

Max. staffing ratio is 1:6

### **Outcomes**

At the end of the course, providers will complete the course report as either:

- **Pass** Where candidates have demonstrated an appropriate level of competence and have sufficient experience.
- **Defer** Where they are not yet proficient in certain aspects of the syllabus or lack experience. In this case candidates must be given an action plan to help them work towards completion.
- **Fail** Where performance is generally weak and the candidate must repeat the assessment after completing an action plan.

### **Appropriate venues**

The assessment course is largely practical in nature, though appropriate indoor facilities may be required for briefing and de-briefing.

Campsites should be valley based and may be commercial sites or sheltered 'farm' sites with limited or no facilities but accessible by vehicle. It would be possible however to run part of the assessment course in wild country if all the candidates were Hill and Moorland Leader trained or assessed.

Throughout the UK there is a huge range in possible venues and potential candidates, therefore providers must think carefully about what they are trying to achieve and manage candidate expectations by using appropriate sites. In most instances there should be no need to drive a great distance to access a suitable site.

It is envisioned that most assessment courses will run as a one-day course with a minimum of eight hours contact time. The assessment could be extended to include an overnight camp, though sleeping does not count as contact time.

NOTE: national Mountain Training organisations will consider any format of assessment course provided it meets the minimum contact time and the guidance contained within the relevant Mountain Training qualification scheme handbook. Providers should ensure they submit their planned programme to their national Mountain Training organisation for approval.

It may be useful to discuss the pros and cons of different campsites and their selection with candidates before travelling to the chosen site/s. It may even be possible to visit more than one campsite location during the assessment to compare and contrast usage and management e.g. a fully appointed commercial campsite vs a farmer's field with little or no facilities. The qualification does not include expeditioning, though more remote wild country sites can be used with appropriate candidates.

Providers must ensure that commercial campsite owners are aware of the course being undertaken on their site. Communication should be sought where required and this in itself could form the basis of a teaching/assessment session.

### **Candidate experience**

Candidates may come to the assessment course as their first contact with a Mountain Training provider or they may already hold a walking qualification such as the Lowland Leader or Hill and Moorland Leader. As there is no face to face training course for this scheme some candidates may have relatively little knowledge of the Mountain Training ethos and processes. Therefore it is inevitable that some input on these may be required by the provider on the assessment course. The online training module addresses these issues but is optional so it would be particularly useful for providers to signpost this before the course and check that candidates are ready to be assessed.

Throughout the course the combined experience of candidates may be used as the basis for discussions on a number of issues including campsites, hygiene, toilet practices and water availability, as well as etiquette etc.

Effective camping management is based on a combination of technical competence, leadership skills and a range of experience. The requirements of the scheme address these elements.

## **1. Leadership and group management**

Groups will look to a Camping Leader for guidance, direction and decision making. Candidates must be able to demonstrate their ability to direct others in a clear but supportive way. Managing groups in a campsite setting can be challenging at times and candidates must be able to articulate expectations and have strategies to maintain these. Assessors can explore these strategies through scenario-based discussions, quizzing them on ways they would adapt these for different situations. Can they recognise when an activity should stop or be substantially changed? Are they able to balance the needs and wishes of the group with their own/organisation, the conditions at the time, the type of activity and safety?

Candidates must understand their duty of care to the group and individuals, and appropriate responsibilities specific to different types of groups. They need to demonstrate an awareness of the factors that influence the choice of close or distant supervision. Discussion, question papers, video

or written exercises are all useful but most important is questioning candidates on how they would adapt their approach to tasks presented on the course for different situations. They also need to come up with strategies for monitoring their groups and their welfare. When aiming to develop independence within their groups they will need to demonstrate how they would assess competence and develop self-sufficiency in a progressive, structured way.

Where possible decision making should be evidence based and careful questioning by assessors should ascertain the reasons for a candidate's decisions. Candidates need to be confident and consistent in their decisions without being overly swayed by the rest of the group. They should be able to articulate their decisions clearly.

Assessment of leadership and management skills is a holistic process based on multiple sources of evidence. This is best achieved as a running theme throughout the assessment course.

### **Top tips**

- A home paper or video presentation task can explore candidates' knowledge and judgements regarding decisions based on activities, group characteristics and environmental conditions.
- Plotting a continuum of close to distant supervision scenarios and the evidence required to make these decisions can be a useful assessment exercise.

## **2. Planning and supervision**

Choosing the appropriate overnight camping site can require a great deal of thought and planning as there are a number of issues that require careful consideration. Assessors need to pay attention to the planning ability of the candidates and whether the aims and abilities of the group are the candidates' main consideration when planning any camping/overnight venture.

Assessors should provide candidates with scenarios that require them to consider the group and their aims, needs and ambitions. Age, abilities, experience, location and equipment availability are just a few things that need to be considered.

Another important factor is the prevailing weather conditions, particularly if there is any exposure to high winds or an identified weather hazard at or near the campsite. Candidates will need a good understanding of weather systems that affect the UK and Ireland and where to obtain information relevant to the campsite venue. Candidates should have a clear idea of how to minimise risk, such as lightning, floods, midges in calm weather or trees in high winds, and manage any possible alternatives.

Candidates must have a clear understanding of all access legislation relating to camping across a wide range of areas, particularly where local access agreements exist. It must also be remembered that access agreements differ across the UK and Ireland so camping in a non-commercial site outside the candidate's home nation may create unanticipated difficulties.

Where a group of candidates are all from a similar background such as DofE or the Scouts, assessors must get a clear message across to candidates that not all groups, organisations or employers operate in the same way by asking some searching questions. As many groups will be under 18 other issues such as duty of care, parental consent and safeguarding should be discussed.

### **Campsite organisation**

Any campsite will require a degree of organisation and candidates should be aware of the issues surrounding selection of the camp area in general and individual tents within it. If leaders are camping with their group, the organisation may be relatively straightforward but at the other end of the spectrum candidates may be preparing their groups for a Gold DofE expedition where they will be operating independently. Specific attention should be paid to the organisation, management and supervision of camp cooking with novices and minors.

Large commercial sites will either allocate a site or direct leaders to specific areas dedicated to group use. Certain factions within the group may require separating or the group might be of mixed gender. Groups may need to be briefed on behaviour issues and this may be of more concern on large commercial sites. Smaller 'wild camping' sites will present a different set of issues and will need to be chosen carefully with due regard to access issues, wind, weather, underfoot conditions, the durability of the ground and other users. It is worth questioning candidates on the impact that overnight camps may have on others and the environment and how they would manage these issues.

Candidates should be questioned on what hazards are present at any potential site. For example, on commercial sites candidates could be asked how they might manage hazards such as site traffic. At the other end of the spectrum extreme weather may become an issue on a wild camp so providers must explore this with candidates and be assured that candidates can identify and manage associated hazards. Assessors must ensure candidates are aware of this and have the necessary knowledge to deal with an unforeseen event or emergency and that includes good effective strategies for locating missing group members.

Visiting two distinctly different campsites will create opportunities for providers to highlight potential risks and assess candidate awareness and risk management strategies. Camp hygiene will be another issue candidates will have to manage, and again there will be huge differences between commercial sites, a farm site with limited facilities and a wild camp with no facilities with water taken from a nearby stream. In this case toilet areas, water and washing facilities need to be carefully selected and monitored. A minimum impact approach for all aspects of the camp is vital and the 'Leave no Trace' principles should be examined throughout the assessment.

### **Top tips**

- Home research tasks (papers, videos, audio recordings etc) can be used to assess the planning and decision making of candidates, looking at campsite selection, risk assessment, equipment selection and management techniques for different scenarios.

## **3. Teaching and learning skills**

Candidates need to be able to command the attention of their groups and deliver knowledge and instructions to their participants with clarity. There should be a good structure to what they say and they should have developed a habit of checking for understanding from their group using a range of methods.

Candidates will often have their own preferred way to introduce new skills to novices so take time to see what they are and get them to share with the rest of the group. Candidates also need to be adaptive in their approach. Assessors can quiz candidates on alternative ways to present topics to different audiences.

Giving each candidate a topic to present or teach to the group is an obvious way to assess this. As well as having good communication candidates should be able to structure their presentation and position themselves and others for effective teaching to take place.

Camping Leaders need to quickly create an environment of trust and confidence within their group so that participants feel safe and comfortable. Age, ability, special needs, confidence and energy levels amongst the group will influence the best approach to achieve this. They should reflect upon the outcome of each session and consider changes in delivery style or content that may improve the outcomes of the next one.

#### **Top tips**

- Look for behaviours that can be described, recorded and fed back to the candidate, e.g. voice characteristics, eye contact, use of names, body position and language, quantity of talk and activity, pace, attention to individuals, giving feedback and encouragement etc.
- Setting different teaching scenarios for the same skill development will test candidates' abilities to adapt their plan and style of delivery.

#### **4. Camping equipment**

Qualification holders should be able to advise a novice about equipment for undertaking camping in the UK and Ireland. Although candidates will frequently wish to promote the equipment they use themselves it is important that they also have the opportunity to evaluate other equipment; a wide selection of tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and other camping equipment must be available. Course directors must ensure that candidates are aware of the appropriate use and care of that equipment, including simple repair kits for tents or a spares kit for stoves. The siting, pitching and organisation of a tent can be a vital component of a comfortable night for all, including the leader, so candidates should be assessed closely on the detail of this.

Modern lightweight equipment has a huge impact on the ability to travel light, however this may not be the best for group use. Ultimately, camping gear must be fit for purpose and candidates need to be aware of the trade-offs and benefits that different gear provides. Assessors should explore candidates' judgement on what is most appropriate for a variety of groups.

There is no requirement for candidates to carry equipment in an expedition rucksack to the campsite, and it is possible that other forms of transport may be used with this qualification (e.g. bicycle or canoe). They may use other means such as kit bags or dry bags to transport equipment efficiently to and from nearby transport efficiently.

Assessors should check candidates' awareness of the basic skills of packing and carrying equipment and how to train novices in appropriate packing of a load, bearing in mind accessibility of contents and centre of gravity and stability for carrying. Strategies that Camping Leaders may use to have the group share and carry essential group equipment between them on the course should also be covered.

#### **Top tips**

- Manufacturers produce great resources with detailed information on their camping equipment. Consider using some of their materials to set tasks such as learning how to use a

- new tent.
- Differentiating between equipment appropriate for use as an independent camper and a novice group is a key assessment objective.

## 5. Camping food and cooking

Camping food should provide energy, be light to carry if part of an expedition, require minimal fuel to cook and be enjoyable to eat. Assessors should ensure that candidates have some nutritional knowledge, including an understanding of the significant difference between simple sugars and complex carbohydrates. Candidate preferences can provide the basis for a discussion on suitable food. Some courses may provide expedition rations, some may require the candidates to provide their own food, while others might provide a budget and integrate planning and purchase into the course itself. Candidates must demonstrate an awareness of the difference between food that is appropriate for personal use and that which is suitable for novices, some of whom may be cooking on camping stoves for the first time. Food preparation and hygiene should be considered.

Providers should assess knowledge of a wide selection of food and drink and involve the candidates in planning menus with consideration to nutritional values, food hygiene, food storage, preparation and cooking. It is important that directors do not let their personal preferences cloud their assessment of this session; for example using boil in the bag versus freeze dried foods. As the scheme includes valley camping with easy access, heavier fresh foods can also be considered.

### Stoves

Providers should create the opportunity for candidates to use and evaluate a range of stoves and fuels. The safety aspects relating to the use of different stoves and fuels must be considered, as must the serious issues of stove use near tents.

The variety of stoves available is huge and appropriate selection is crucial; the potential for a minor incident or a major disaster is far greater than with any other piece of equipment. Particular attention should be paid to managing fire risk when cooking with a group or when adding fuel or changing gas canisters.

The nature of the proposed campsites, food, the experience of the group, any journey being undertaken and what fuel is desirable or available will have a direct bearing on what stove is used. Assessors need to cover this area of the syllabus in detail, questioning candidates on the pros and cons and potential pitfalls.

Assessors should check that candidates' management of the fire risk associated with using stoves is centred on selecting appropriate stoves for the group and putting in place sensible procedures for their use. For example, this may include managing cooking as a communal activity, taking place away from tents and ensuring refuelling is managed with care.

### Top tips

- Scenarios can be presented to candidates before the course begins in which they have to select and bring appropriate menus and foods to cook on the course.
- Candidates should be encouraged to bring an appropriate stove to the course for such a scenario, but this is not essential. Providers should supply a range of stoves and fuel for candidates to select for set scenarios on the course.