



Tests and Qualifications Synopsis

The tests and qualifications are agreed jointly within the BCU Coaching Service, consisting of the National Associations for Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England.

TESTS OF PERSONAL PERFORMANCE

There are five levels of personal performance tests. They gradually build up the range and level of performance of the strokes and techniques necessary for successful paddling in the canoeing discipline concerned. The first three levels are assessed on flat water, while the 4 and 5 Star are assessed in the real situation to which they relate. There are no age restrictions on BCU tests.

The levels are intended as 'milestones' to indicate when natural learning plateaus have been reached, as follows:

- 1 Star Beginner (encouragement test)
- 2 Star Improver
- 3 Star Intermediate
- 4 Star Proficient
- 5 Star Advanced

TYPES OF CANOE AND KAYAK

The tests and qualifications system is based on the need to cater for devotees of three main types of craft, with further sub-divisions among them. The three main types are:

Closed Cockpit Kayak Kayaks designed for use on white water or the sea where a large measure of the control of the kayak is gained by use of the lower body through the knees and thighs gripping firmly within the boat. (For practical purposes, decked canoes also come within this definition)

Canoe An open boat derived from the traditional craft of the indigenous peoples of North America, which is propelled with a single bladed paddle, and can also be poled or sailed.

Open Cockpit Kayak Kayaks designed for touring or racing which have large cockpits, where the knees are not engaged under the deck. In the event of a capsize the occupant falls freely out. Canoes which are used for fast touring and racing also fall within this category.

DEFINITIONS FOR INLAND CANOEING

Very Sheltered Water

The definition involves:

- Quiet canals with easy bankside access and egress.
- Small lakes, which are not large enough, and do not have difficult landing areas, for problems to occur if there is a sudden change in conditions.
- Specified sites on gentle, slow moving rivers.

The definition implies weather conditions which are not in themselves likely to cause problems. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low.

Sheltered Inland Water

The definition involves:

- Flat water rivers, faster flowing, but not involving the shooting of, or playing on weirs or running rapids/ Lakes. Discretion and commonsense must apply when considering the use of lakes. To operate further than 200 yards from shore on a large lake can be a serious undertaking. To paddle in offshore breezes on large lakes requires the same degree of caution as for the sea. Water temperature (especially in Scottish Lochs) must always be a consideration. Suitable lagoons, or sections of sheltered bays, of large lakes can sometimes be designated 'Sheltered' or even 'Very Sheltered' water by careful and sensible selection.
- The definition implies normal conditions. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low.





Moderate Inland Water

The definition involves:

Grade II white water, and equivalent weirs

Advanced Inland Water

The definition involves:

Very large lakes

Grade III white water and above

DEFINITIONS FOR SEA KAYAKING

The sea is a very different environment from inland waters. It can easily ensnare the unwary, the uninitiated, or the careless, with its sometimes apparently tranquil appearance. It can change, often gradually and imperceptibly, at other times dramatically and suddenly, with devastating consequences. For these reasons the BCU has always operated a separate syllabus for awards for sea canoeing.

Sheltered Tidal Waters

The definition involves:

Small enclosed bays where there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore

Enclosed harbours where there is minimal possibility of being blown off shore

Defined beaches (a short section of beach with easy landing throughout, no tide races or overfalls, in conditions in which swimmers and beach craft could be happily operating) - winds not above force 3 (force 2 if offshore when the greatest of caution must be exercised)

The upper reaches of some suitable, slow moving estuaries

In all cases the wind and weather conditions must be favourable

Moderate Tidal Water

The definition involves:

A stretch of coastline or estuary in close proximity to the shore, with easy landing, not involving fast tidal streams, tidal races, or overfalls, winds not above force 3 (force 2 if offshore, when the greatest of caution must be exercised)

The upper reaches of some estuaries

Advanced Sea

The definition involves:

Any journey on the sea where tidal races or overfalls may be encountered, which cannot be avoided

Sections of coastline where difficult landings may be encountered or where landings may not be possible

Difficult sea states and/or stronger winds (force 4 or above)

DEFINITIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SURFING

MODERATE SURF

The definition involves:

Beaches which are free of significant hazards (strong rips or undertow, tidal streams, rocks, groins). An area of beach must be marked out with flags to contain the group and prevent any loss of communication

The area selected must not interfere with other beach users - swimmers and surfers in particular (Third party insurance is required on some beaches to indemnify against damage caused to other beach users)

Small to moderate waves - 1 metre maximum (see BCU guidelines for assessing surf height and character).