

BCU 3 Star Freestyle Award - Guidance Notes

The purpose of these guidance notes is to provide an overview of the assessment process. If you have any further questions, after reading the guidance notes, please contact the course provider or your home nation coaching department.

Aim:

The 3 Star Freestyle Award provides an introduction to the fundamental skills of freestyle paddlesport, from which it is possible to build more advanced skills.

The BCU Freestyle Star Awards have been designed in a way that allows them to develop in line with the sport. They encompass a wide view of what freestyle is, having both a recreational and competitive emphasis.

A successful candidate will not be expected to perform all elements perfectly but will need a basic understanding of how using the core elements will allow further progression.

Assessment Prerequisites:

BCU 2 Star standard or the equivalent experience is the appropriate level of performance for paddlers to begin working towards the 3 Star Freestyle Award.

Candidates are encouraged to record their freestyle sessions in order to improve their reflective skills and to provide evidence of at least 10 freestyle sessions (totalling 20 hours) in varied locations, where possible.

Candidates must show confidence and the ability to operate safely and effectively in the environment throughout the assessment.

Boat Selection:

Many of the 3 dimensional movements within the freestyle discipline require a short, low volume boat. Assessment candidates will need to equip themselves suitably to ensure the practical components of the award can be achieved.

Certification:

The award is available in closed cockpit canoe or kayak, and certificated as either;

- BCU 3 Star Freestyle (K1)
- BCU 3 Star Freestyle (C1)

Although there are other disciplines within the freestyle arena, including squirt boats and open canoes, the award concentrates on the float classes of kayak and closed cockpit canoe. It is intended that paddlers will then use the core skills gained in the Freestyle Star Awards to specialise in other disciplines. All disciplines of freestyle are actively promoted.

Assessment Venue:

Assessment takes place on a section of white water that does not need to include a river journey. The stretch of water (up to grade 3 but primarily focused on grade 1 and 2) to be used should include;

- Sections of deep moving water and eddies (deep enough to safely roll and capsize)
- A wave suitable for surfing with sufficient depth to be safe
- A small hole (stopper) suitable for surfing with sufficient depth to be safe and easily exited

The wave and stopper may be part of the same feature. It is important that the whole syllabus can be covered without impairment due to venue choice. The assessment may be run across separate venues.

Assessment Duration

Assessment of this award can be completed in one day. This will include both theory and practical components of the award.

Part A1 – Core Elements

The following core elements are integral to the execution of the core skills. The candidate needs to show evidence of the following core elements within the core skills (A2) that will be demonstrated.

A1.1 Warm-up and warm-down

Warm-up is about the ability to prepare both body and mind for the activity to be undertaken. This may take place a number of times during the session.

Warm-down is about the ability to effectively reduce the delayed onset of muscle soreness to aid recovery.

At the time of assessment candidates must have an awareness of why and when they should undertake a warm-up and warm-down. The assessor will provide an opportunity for candidates to warm up/down. The candidate should have an understanding of dynamic and static stretching (minimising injury) as well as psychological preparation. Through questioning and observation the assessor will gain an understanding of why the candidate has chosen the types of warm-up and warm-down they have selected.

A1.2 Posture and connectivity

Posture is about the ability to adopt a sitting position that allows a greater and more powerful range of movement. This also helps prevent sports injuries and fatigue.

Connectivity is about the ability to efficiently transfer the paddler's energy to the boat in order to perform freestyle manoeuvres.

At the time of assessment candidates need to demonstrate posture that allows the full range of movement and creates optimum power potential. The assessor will take into account the candidate's genetic make-up.

A1.3 Rotation and synchronicity

Rotation is about the ability to wind up and unwind the torso to generate rotational momentum and torque through a pivot point.

Synchronicity is about the ability to move the upper and lower body independently yet co-operatively to perform freestyle manoeuvres.

At the time of assessment candidates need to demonstrate upper and lower body separation that leads to synchronicity. The assessor will also be looking for the ability to use appropriate head rotation and visual focus points.

A1.4 Intensity and relaxation

Intensity is about the amount of energy being transmitted. Maximum intensity is not necessarily the optimal level for performance.

Relaxation is not necessarily the opposite of intensity, relaxation and intensity work together in complementary ways to bring out the best in you and your performance.

Together they are about the ability to free the body to perform in a powerful yet flowing way.

At the time of assessment candidates must demonstrate the ability to efficiently use intensity and relaxation appropriate to the environment and manoeuvre.

For example accelerate, change pace at appropriate moments and show evidence of techniques which make best use of the flat or moving water environment, and using the correct power to enter, maintain and exit river features).

A1.5 Control, balance and paddle dexterity

Control is about the ability to use the core muscles to control the boat's edge and trim.

Balance is about the ability to maintain static and dynamic stability both proactively and reactively.

Paddle Dexterity is about the ability to adapt the use of the paddle to meet the demands of the environment whether proactively or during reactive measures.

At the time of assessment candidates may still be developing these core elements. The assessor will be looking to see demonstrations including varied strokes when manoeuvring and non-paddle assisted edging, the ability to carve and skid the

craft, to do cross bow and non cross bow strokes (for drive and turning), the ability to maintain upright body posture without relying on the paddle for total support and spatial awareness.

Typically the assessor may use breaking in and out as tools to see the required skills.

A1.6 Methods of position and set-up

Position is about the ability to manoeuvre to a pre-determined point on the feature.

Set-up is about the ability to set-up with the correct position and angle required to initiate the desired manoeuvre.

At the time of assessment candidates may still be developing the ability to read a play feature's characteristics and make the necessary adaptations. Taking this into consideration, the assessor must see the candidate demonstrate the beginnings of being able to read the play feature and make adaptations to appropriately set-up for a given manoeuvre.

The difference in position and set-up required in different features will be discussed and where possible demonstrated. The candidate will also be asked of their understanding of the clock concept for setting angles in relation to current vectors whilst positioning the craft.

Part A2 – Core Skills

All core elements need to be demonstrated within the core skills. Where possible and unless otherwise stated core skills will be demonstrated on both sides.

A2.1 Rolling

The ability to roll is of key importance at 3 Star. At the time of assessment candidates are required to roll on moving water with consistency, but 100% rolling success is not expected.

Environment;	Grade 1-2 white water
Behaviour;	Effective roll on one side and beginnings of the roll on the less preferred side
Capability;	Synchronicity, posture, and connectivity

A2.2 Supporting

At the time of assessment candidates need to demonstrate a support stroke that is part of their overall paddling with a view to being proactive rather than reactive. This means they should work from the back of the blade and take support from power strokes thus showing evidence of an active blade demonstrating the paddlers overall balance.

At 3 Star, whilst rolling may still be a relatively new skill, a candidate should not need to be supporting constantly to avoid rolling.

A candidate should be comfortably able to demonstrate a range of ways of supporting on the flat water, and have an awareness and beginnings of a range of support techniques on a variety of situations

Environment;	Flat water
Behaviour;	Active blade whilst maintaining a balanced upright posture
Capability;	Paddle dexterity, control and balance

A2.3 Flat-water manoeuvres

At the time of assessment candidates are required to perform flat water exercises that demonstrate they can effectively use edges, trim and speed whilst allowing the boat's continued momentum.

Assessors will be looking for movements to flow and not stall. The candidate will be expected to execute on flat-water stern dips, low angle lean cleans and an effective double pump leading to the first end of a cartwheel.

Stern dips

Environment;	Flat water
Behaviour;	Front end elevating at least 20 degrees
Capability;	Intensity and relaxation, posture (rotation), set-up

Lean clean

Environment;	Flat water
Behaviour;	Bow and stern submersing
Capability;	Synchronicity, rotation, and control

Double pump

Environment;	Flat water
Behaviour;	Front end going under craft with minimum 20 degree angle
Capability;	Connectivity, control, synchronicity

A2.4 Entering & exiting play features

At the time of assessment candidates are required to demonstrate the ability to cross eddy lines and simple flows to catch waves and stoppers. Assessors would expect candidates to get on and off the feature as required.

Exiting should be carried out so that the candidate regains an appropriate eddy.

Environment; Up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2

Behaviour; Cross eddy lines, catch features

Capability; Position, Control, Posture

A2.5 Wave surfing

At the time of assessment candidates must demonstrate the ability to front surf and perform simple manoeuvring from left to right.

Environment; Up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2

Behaviour; Hold boat in a straight surf and move right and left on wave

Capability; Synchronicity, posture, set-up

A2.6 Hole surfing

At the time of assessment candidates need to demonstrate a positive posture whilst being able to move the boat around the feature using both paddle and trim techniques showing their ability to be dynamic within the feature. A stable static side surf on both sides, with the ability to switch from facing one direction to the other must be demonstrated.

Environment; Up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2

Behaviour; Sit stable and in one position in the hole and move around hole to exit

Capability; Posture, control, and dexterity

A2.7 Shuvits

"A Shuvit is a manoeuvre that allows the boat to go from a front or side surf position to back surf position and back again using the same active blade throughout the movement. The movement should be continuous."

At the time of assessment candidates must be able to initiate the move from a front or side surf. Candidates are required to keep on the same blade.

Environment; Wave or hole up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2

Behaviour; Boat movement from bow at 12 o'clock (front surf) to at least 4 and back (or vice versa for other side) or boat movement from 3 o'clock (side surf) to at least 6 o'clock (or vice versa for other side)

Capability; Position, set-up, paddle dexterity

A2.8 Flat spins

"The Flat Spin involves performing a 360 degree rotation through a front and back surf finishing back in a front surf position whilst on the wave or hole."

Environment;	Wave or Hole up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2
Behaviour;	Boat to do full spin so that it ends with the bow within 30 degrees of the start position, if the spin continues past this point this is acceptable
Capability;	Position, control, posture

A2.9 Stern dips on moving water

"The stern dip involves slicing the stern of the boat underwater and elevating the bow in to the air whilst rotating around the stern."

Environment;	Grade 1 or 2 flow
Behaviour;	Bow of boat to rise 45 degrees or more from the surface
Capability;	Intensity and Relaxation, Posture (rotation), set-up

A2.10 Bow ender and pirouettes

"The bow ender is a near vertical manoeuvre where the boats stern reaches an elevation of more than 45°. Pirouette adds at least a 45 degree spin on the bow whilst in this elevated position."

At the time of assessment candidates need to demonstrate the ability to correctly present the bow of their boat to the flow, so that the flow makes the boat lift to an elevation of 45° or greater. Once the boat has lifted the candidate must then be able to proactively control the boat and either spin or land back on the hull of the boat.

Environment;	Wave or hole up to grade 3 but where possible grade 2
Behaviour;	Bow to bury, lifting boat to at least 45 degrees (in a feature or flow)
Capability;	Balance, position, set-up

A2.11 The beginning of a routine

During the training phase trainees are to partake in a 45 second ride to explore their new skills. This starts to introduce the ability to link moves into a routine and provide a taste of competition paddling. The emphasis here will be on fun and effectively utilising time within rides. At the time of assessment candidates are to perform a 45 second ride demonstrating 3 different moves of their choice.

Environment;	Any used for the above moves
Behaviour;	3 different moves (left and right count as 2)
Capability;	All

Part B - Rescue Skills

B.1 Deep-water rescue

At the time of assessment candidates are to perform a safe, timely and appropriate deep-water rescue on moving water. They must use appropriate dialogue with the swimmer whilst maintaining control of the rescue. The candidates are to act as both rescuer and rescuee. Candidates must be aware of the importance of safe lifting techniques and how to best use the person in the water to assist in their own rescue.

B.2 Throwline

At the time of assessment candidates should understand how to use a throwline, both as a rescuer and a swimmer. The candidate should throw a line to a swimmer around 10 metres from the bank and the line should ideally reach the swimmer first time. A safe and dynamic stance should be demonstrated when the swimmer takes hold of the line.

B.3 Capsize, swim and self-rescue

At the time of assessment candidates must show good defensive and aggressive swimming techniques down a small section of moving water. Candidates must show they can rescue themselves if they swim out of their kayak using safe and dynamic defensive swimming.

Part C – Safety, leadership and group skills

Candidates must show confidence and the ability to operate safely and effectively in the environment throughout the assessment.

C.1 Personal risk management

At the time of assessment candidates need to work together and help each other in achieving a safe, fun freestyle session. Candidates must show their ability to identify potential risks. Assessors may use discussion of the suitability of various river features for playing if the venue allows.

C.2 Awareness of others

At the time of assessment candidates should be aware of others around them. They do not need to be responsible for others but they should work together and help each other. Candidates should be aware of upstream traffic and not obstruct other water users.

Part D – Theory

At the time of assessment candidates must demonstrate a good level of general knowledge of freestyle paddlesport. Below we have provided some example of the questions that may be asked:

D.1 Equipment:

Candidates should have knowledge and experience of using a range of equipment. Know how and why equipment has evolved and how best to use it.

Sample questions:

How do you choose an appropriate size of paddle?

Provide three important considerations when fitting and adjusting a K1/C1 freestyle boat?

D.2 Safety

Candidates should have a sound safety framework with use of practical, dynamic risk assessments.

Sample questions:

What equipment would you wear for a quick freestyle session in the winter?

How do you decide if a stopper is safe or not?

D.3 Weather

Candidates should know how to understand and interpret weather forecast information from a variety of sources.

Sample questions:

Where can you get weather information from?

What are the important elements of a forecast with regards to safety on the river?

D.4 Hypothermia and first aid

Candidates should understand the factors that contribute to hypothermia and have strategies to avoid it. They should be able to deal with the most likely paddlesport injuries.

Sample questions:

How do you prevent hypothermia?

What are the signs that someone is becoming hypothermic?

What are the most important things to do if someone is hypothermic?

D.5 Freestyle environment

An appreciation of the environment we paddle in should be a key underpinning principle for candidates. Candidates should be aware of their environmental impact and be proactive in minimising this impact.

Sample questions:

How can we minimise the impact on the environment and prevent bank erosion?

What role does the Environment Agency play with regards to environmental factors?

D.6 Competition

Candidates should have an understanding the basics of UK competition structure and rules.

Sample questions:

How long is a freestyle run?

Name two different disciplines within freestyle

D.7 General

Candidates should have a wide general knowledge of all aspects of the sport.

Sample questions:

Why is it important to remain hydrated while paddling?

Where else can you paddle freestyle in the UK?

Why are ear plugs recommended for freestyle paddling?

D.8 Etiquette

Candidates should promote a positive image for paddlesport with other river users and local residents.

Sample Questions:

Who has right of way; the paddler descending the rapid or the paddler playing on the feature?

What should you do after entering an eddy if you have other paddlers descending the rapid wanting to enter the same eddy?