



Training Assessment and Certification Committee Policy for Trip Participants, Leaders, Instructors and Assessors

Policy adopted by the NACK Board of Directors as of 11/03/05

Background: The training committee is responsible for regulating training, assessment and certification of members, trip leaders, instructors and assessors for the club. It is their responsibility to formulate and recommend the training, assessment and certification policy for ratification by the Board of Directors. When approved this policy shall have the force of bylaws. If conflict exists between this policy and the bylaws the bylaws shall take precedence.

This policy serves a number of purposes.

1. It defines clear guidelines for all members, and those placed in positions of responsibility for training and safety.
2. It communicates in advance the nature of the commitment all persons in positions of trust must meet before accepting such positions.
3. It provides standards that must be met and maintained to retain such positions and certifications.

Member Paddlers

NACK members are aware of the strong safety and training component of our club. When asked why they should participate in the Training, Assessment and Certification (TAC) program they gave a variety of thoughtful responses including:

- to ensure safety
- to enhance skills
- to build confidence
- to gain the trust of other members
- to find gaps in our abilities
- to get objective critique
- because it is hard to honestly assess oneself and see ones errors.

The training and assessment policy is consistent with these goals. Details of NACK skills assessment criteria are given in the NACK Training, Assessment and Certification System Guidelines available on the website. Those wishing to attend NACK sanctioned paddles must be willing to be a supportive member of the group, abide by the guidelines of the trip leader and meet the following requirements:

1. Each paddler must be a member in good standing of North Atlantic Canoe and Kayak, Inc – NACK or be the guest of such a member, who will be responsible for their safety and conduct.
2. Each paddler must be a member in good standing of the American Canoe Association – ACA or pay the current ACA event fee.

3. Each guest paddler must pass a pre-trip evaluation given by the trip leader and may also be required to pay a NACK activity fee.
4. Each paddler must have on file with NACK and the ACA an approved ACA waiver signed and dated in the current year or submit such waiver to the trip leader before embarking.
5. Each member paddler must have successfully completed a NACK assessment certifying their skills at the level required by the paddle. Their NACK membership card or equivalent certificate identifying their skill level may be requested for review prior to the trip.
6. In order to maintain participation rights paddlers must read and obey all ACA safety guidelines as published by NACK.

Trip Leaders

NACK members were asked to define the criteria for a good trip leader and responded with the following “hard” skills:

- should be an experienced paddler with good safety skills,
- should be trained to render First Aid
- should have good communication skills
- should keep their skills current through regular training and practice.
- should either know or become familiar with the local area before leading the trip

They went on to list a series of “soft” skills:

- Should be interested in developing leadership skills
- Should be able to gain group confidence
- Should be accepted by the group
- Should be flexible
- Should show a positive attitude
- Should develop personal knowledge of each group member’s capabilities
- Should be good at assessing on-water problems
- Should be good at making decisions and managing the group
- Should be capable of tying together loose ends and delegating jobs.

Hard skills can be taught in standard training sessions. Soft skills are more difficult to provide and are generally acquired through experience. NACK intends to approach the problem of developing trip leaders through a system of training, mentoring and assessment. We recognize that the demands of protected water trips are more approachable than is the case for open water venues.

Flat-water and Advanced Flat-water Trip Leaders: Persons wishing to lead NACK sanctioned trips at the Flat-water (FW) or Advanced Flat-water (AFW) level must meet the following requirements:

1. The leader must be a member in good standing of North Atlantic Canoe and Kayak, Inc – NACK.
2. The leader must be a member in good standing of the American Canoe Association – ACA.
3. Each leader must have on file with NACK and the ACA an approved ACA waiver signed and dated in the current year.

4. Each leader must have successfully completed a NACK assessment certifying their skills at or above the trip levels they intend to lead.
5. Each leader must have completed the ACA "Essentials of Kayaking" course of instruction or equivalent. The leader may be asked to show appropriate ACA or equivalent credentials demonstrating completion of such training.
6. Each leader must have assisted as backup with an approved NACK trip leader on at least three trips at the level being certified during which time mentoring shall take place. Documentation of equivalent experience may be substituted if deemed acceptable by the Training Committee.
7. Each leader must have planned and led two trips at the level being certified with an assessor designated by the Training Chairman acting as backup. During the second trip leadership evaluation will take place.
8. In order to maintain this certification the leader must read and obey all ACA safety guidelines as published by NACK.
9. Trip leaders are required to understand and foster all ACA and NACK safety guidelines.
10. Trip leaders are expected to maintain safety and rescue skills. They must participate in at least on training/practice session scheduled by the Training Committee per year.

Intra-coastal, Open-water and Advanced Open-water Trip Leaders: Persons wishing to lead NACK sanctioned trips at the Intra-coastal (IC), Open-water (OW) or Advanced Open-water (AOW) level must meet the following requirements:

1. Each leader must meet criteria 1-4 stated above under Flat-water and Advanced Flat-water leadership.
2. Each leader must have completed the ACA "Open Water Coastal Navigation and Touring" curriculum or equivalent. The leader may be asked to show appropriate ACA or equivalent credentials demonstrating completion of this training.
3. Each leader must have assisted as backup with an approved NACK trip leader on at least five trips at the level being certified during which time mentoring shall take place.
4. Each leader must have planned and led three trips at the level being certified with an Assessor designated by the Training Chairman acting as backup. During the third trip leadership evaluation will take place.
5. In order to maintain this certification the leader must read and obey all ACA safety guidelines as published by NACK.

Instructors

Instruction is at the heart of NACK goals for member safety and development. Persons wishing to provide instructional services to NACK members at NACK sanctioned instructional activities must meet the following requirements.

1. Each instructor must be a member in good standing of NACK.
2. Each instructor must be a member in good standing of both ACA and the ACA Safety, Education and Instruction Committee – SEIC.
3. Each instructor must have on file with NACK and the ACA an approved ACA waiver signed and dated in the current year.
4. Each instructor must have paid for a NACK "Instructor" membership.
5. Each instructor must be certified by the ACA to teach at the level of instruction being requested for NACK approval. Prospective instructors may be asked at any time to show current ACA credentials certifying this training level. Such credentials will be verified regularly by the Training Committed Chairman
6. Each instructor must be an "active" member of NACK meeting their work commitment and all other commitments required by the club and the Training Committee.

7. In order to maintain this certification the instructor must maintain their current ACA instructor certification maintaining currency with all fees and memberships as well as completing all required updates. They must also understand, abide by and teach to the current ACA safety requirements as published by NACK.
8. NACK Instructors are expected to charge NACK members for training, offering favorable rates where possible, especially for group and continuing services.

Assessors

NACK Assessors have arguably the highest responsibility in the organization. They also have some of the most demanding of commitments, since all members are guaranteed one free assessment per year. Persons wishing to provide assessment services to NACK members must meet the following requirements:

1. A prospective Assessor must already be a working instructor meeting criteria 1-4 for NACK instructors.
2. A prospective Assessor must be hold a current ACA Open Water Coastal Instructor rating or higher and may then assess at or below their certification level for ratings up to Open Water Coastal skill level.
3. A prospective Assessor must participate in at least three assessments at various levels determined by the Training Director prior to becoming an Assessor.
4. Certification for Advanced Open Water skills must be provided by the ACA following their current assessor guidelines.
5. NACK Assessors are expected to provide a certain number of assessments free to NACK members as part of their NACK work commitment.
6. As possible NACK Assessors are encouraged to observe, collaborate and critique each other's methods.
7. Should NACK require Assessment services beyond that mandated by the work commitment a reasonable payment plan shall be arranged for qualified Assessors.