

Touring

Open Water Touring Award

Award Description

This award is designed to progress your ability in decision making and personal paddling skills on open water, with a group of your peers.

Extended Award Description

Your Open Water Touring Award endorses your judgment, decision making and expertise and requires a good understanding of touring on open water or estuaries. You should be confident planning and undertaking journeys with winds up to force 4. On the sea you will be using sheltered areas, small bays, harbours and the upper reaches of some suitable, slow moving estuaries during neap tides, with minimal possibility of being blown offshore. You will be happy operating in force 3 wind (force 2 if the wind direction is offshore). Your confidence should be based upon both proficiency in skills and a broad appreciation of your surroundings and the environmental context. Your award should be seen as a sound basis for independently building the experience and expertise associated with Multi Day Touring Award holders.

Award Content

1. Location

When heading to the water we should have an understanding of our paddling location and how we will access it. Some factors we may consider are:

Factor: Weather conditions

We may need to determine: What is the forecast and what are the actual conditions? Which direction and how strong is the wind? Is it due to increase or decrease? Is it going to change direction? What impact might the topography have and how will the forecast wind speed impact on the waters that we can choose from? Are there any other relevant weather factors we should take into account? How will we find this information? Can we estimate how the forecast will translate to look and feel on the water?

Factor: Water conditions

We may need to determine: What are the current water levels? What size is the area we will be paddling? How far from shore could we be and how far will

we paddle? Does the water we are going to paddle on have any flow? Are there any important landmarks or hazards to look out for on our journey? Can we use these to know where we are on our journey? What is the water quality like? How would we find this information?

Factor: Access and environment

We may need to determine: What restrictions might there be on the water we are paddling on? Where will we access/egress the water? What environmental factors might affect this decision? How would we direct support to us in an emergency situation? How can we reduce our impact on the environment and animals around us?

2. Getting Ready

Before getting to the water we must choose suitable kit and equipment and have the correct knowledge to use it. Key points we may consider are:

What will we take?

Do we have the kit we need to keep us safe and comfortable throughout our trip? How will we pack the kit and keep it dry? What impact will how we pack our craft have on paddling and manoeuvring? What needs to be left loose, tied in or on a leash? How will we pack the kit to make it easy to access? How will we pack the kit to make our time in the craft comfortable? What nutritional requirements might we have during our trip?

What will we wear?

What are the clothing options available to us as tourers? How might external factors affect which clothing we choose? Are we confident in the use of our chosen personal safety equipment?

What will we use?

What are the different equipment options available and why might we choose one over the other? How might different hull design/type impact our paddling? How do we use our equipment? What do we do if there is a problem with it? What additional equipment might we take to assist our method of travel? Might our method of travel change throughout the day and why?

3. At the Water

Before we set out on our journey we need to be confident in our ability to deal with the complications it might bring. We must also be aware of other users and consider how we will safely get on the water.

Consideration: Other users - we may need to share the water with swimmers, paddlers and anglers, amongst others. To do this safely, an 'etiquette' amongst

these users has developed to minimise conflict and help everyone enjoy the environment. It is also important to know something about the others we are paddling with.

We may need to observe: Who else is in the area? Are we using a managed or supervised venue? What is the etiquette here? Where can we park and change considerately to other users? Who else is paddling with us? What is their current ability? Have we an agreed aim and motivation for the trip? What size is the group we are paddling with and is this appropriate? Are there any specific needs within the group? Does everyone we are paddling with have the skills and equipment needed for the day? Do we have a plan for the day and how will we check it is being adhered to?

Consideration: Safety

We may need to know: How will we outfit and set up our craft for this trip? How will we navigate? How can we protect ourselves and others from any potential hazards? What additional equipment might be useful to carry and have access to? What would we do if someone we are paddling with gets really cold or overheats? What potential injuries might we need to treat? How might we do this? Do the conditions match our forecast? How can we change our plans if they are not? How will we summon help if needed? What pre-trip plans can we prepare to make this trip safer?

Consideration: Getting to the water

We may need to determine: How are we going to get to the access point and do we need to organise a shuttle? What is the best way to carry, load and secure our craft to protect ourselves or others from injury and prevent unnecessary damage? How will we get our craft and additional equipment to the water? Are there any restricted areas and how would we find this out?

4. Touring Skills

When paddling we should be in control. Key features of being in control include our ability to stay relaxed and have our body and craft best set up for any manoeuvre. To make appropriate decisions we must be able to observe and communicate with those we paddle with and monitor our own performance and wellbeing. We need to understand our environment and plan ahead to use external forces to our best advantage. We should have the ability to move our craft forwards skilfully and efficiently as well as manoeuvring in tighter places and stopping.

Skill: Getting on the water

We may need to consider: How does the height of the bank and depth of the water affect how we launch? How can we work together to launch safely? Are

there other water users who will be affected by our getting on the water? How can we minimise any disturbance to them? How will the wind and flow affect the positioning of our boat as we launch? How can we stabilise the boat during launch? Where will our equipment be positioned while we launch?

Skill: Forward paddling

We may need to consider: How can we set up our boat to help us paddle in the direction we wish to go? How can changing our trim, edge, paddling speed and style aid our journey? How can we best utilise the wind or flow to aid us? How is the wind and flow going to affect us?

Skill: Manoeuvring

We may need to know: What strokes would we use to stop and turn our craft? Which strokes would we use for different turn angles? What strokes would we use to move our craft sideways or in reverse? Can we perform all tasks bilaterally? What cross-deck strokes might we use? Which techniques are best suited for paddling on the upstream and downstream side of the boat and why might we choose these?

Skill: Journeying - when journeying we will think about looking where we want to be. 'Future water' is a term often used to describe this.

We may need to know: What boat and body positions we can use to get the most from the environment? What other factors could come into play? What paddle strokes, poling techniques and sailing methods can we use to be as efficient and effective as possible? When might we choose to use a pole or ropes instead of a paddle? How can we use the wind to our advantage? What strokes and methods would we use to go around an obstruction, through small gaps, move sideways, enter or cross eddy lines or flows and prevent a capsize? How can we affect the shape and speed of our track over water?

Skill: Working as a group

We may need to consider: Are those we are paddling with coping with the conditions and are they able to cope with expected future conditions? How can we best monitor and maintain our own performance and that of the group? Are our pre-trip plans being adhered to and do they need to change? Are we communicating with each other effectively? Do we have strategies to help ourselves and others stay focused on our trip?

Skill: Assessing and adjusting to our environment - as we journey different land and waterscapes changes may occur. These may be permanent such as the topography, or temporary such as water or weather conditions.

We may need to consider: How can we identify changes to the environment as we travel? What action will we need to take to adjust to these changes? Do we need to change our travelling method to take these changes into account? What could we amend in our setup or methods to take these changes into account? How best can we evaluate upcoming hazards to mitigate the impact they have on us? How can we identify safe areas and use them to our advantage? How will we deal with paddling through waves or against the wind? How might the other craft present help or hinder us in a difficult environment? Can additional equipment help with this? What methods will we use to navigate our journey? How will we cope with reduced visibility? Can we identify our position on a map by using our surroundings and/or map reading skills? How will we set and follow a bearing?

Skill: Rescue

We may need to know: How would we safely get ourselves or others back to shore or into the craft on each type of water? How would we deal with a capsized craft alone or as a team on different types of water? What are options to deal with a swamped craft? How would we deal with loose, lost, damaged or pinned kit? How and where would we position our craft to enable us to assist or protect other paddlers? How can we set up raft and towing systems efficiently? What would we do to deal with a swamped raft? How would we deal with the rescue or recovery of another paddler in different types of water? What equipment could we use to assist us in rescue? If a mishap does occur, do we have any mental strategies which will help us to stay focused and resilient?

5. After the Session

Every paddle session is an opportunity for learning and improving. We can use each session to positively aid our future development by reflecting on our trip.

Look around: Have conditions changed whilst we were out on the water? Was that expected? Did anything else occur which was not expected whilst on our trip? How did we deal with that?

Watching what others do: How was our trip in relation to others? Why did we/they have a good day? Are they using their skills more efficiently than us?

Consider what you will take away: What have we learnt today? What can we focus on next time?

6. Future Development

Each day we spend paddling further expands our skills and knowledge, creating a more enjoyable experience on the water. With no two experiences ever the same, we never stop learning.

Continually evaluating the choices we make creates a natural evolution of decision making ability and skills. When we reach a certain point in this, it may be worth considering moving onto the Multi Day Touring Award.

