



SEA KAYAK GUIDES ALLIANCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Level 2 & Level 3 Exam Overview and Preparations

Congratulations on moving forward with sea kayak guiding certification!

We hope that this document helps to set you up well for expectations for your Level 2 or Level 3 exam, by learning from previous Level 2 and Level 3 guide candidates as well as examiner feedback that has accrued overtime.

Document Use: Please use this document as a personal checklist to ensure that you are completely and appropriately prepared for your examination.

Key Differences Between Level 1/AOG Courses and L2-3 Exams

The Level 1 and Assistant Overnight Guide courses (including AOG upgrade) are designed as a course and exam in combination. Whereas, the Level 2 and Level 3 exams are not instructional and are a more condensed opportunity to assess your competencies for sea kayak guiding in more challenging water conditions and with more responsibilities. This exam format requires that candidates are clear about the expectations and ready for both the process and the outcomes of the exam ahead of time.

The primary goal during L2 & L3 exams is to assess the candidates for their ability to solve complex challenges in dynamic environments. These environments are dictated by the level of water classification they seek to guide in. A guide must demonstrate their capacity in leadership on the water, decision making as well as the technical knowledge necessary for their work in coastal environments.

Level 2 and Level 3 exams take place in remote or semi-remote wilderness locations within a one day paddle of the launch site. Often, a base camp is used for the period of the exam, with day trips launching from the base-camp. Location and duration of overnight stays and day excursions will be the discretion of the guide examiner. Without a doubt, weather and sea state conditions vary; however, it is the goal to have water conditions and classification levels match the level of assessment. In addition, scenarios and assessment are designed to match the level of assessment. As with AOG or Level 1 assessments, scenarios have a greater frequency of minor or major 'events' than that which would usually occur in real-time guiding. This allows the examiner to assess decision making and leadership within a wide range and shorter time span.

In this way, exams can be both physically and mentally demanding, as can sea kayak guiding. Review and practice of physical skills such as paddling and rescue, camp craft, technical knowledge and guiding leadership skills is essential. It is expected that candidates have practiced their skills and have a working knowledge of the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of BC Technical Manual.

Professional Expectations

For flow, efficiency and professionalism, it is expected that candidates arrive:

- On time
- With paperwork and financials for the exam already sorted
- Well prepared mentally and physically, well-rested, and in good health

- With appropriate knowledge preparation for navigation and overall success (weather, tides & currents, charts, area information, etc.)
- With appropriate equipment (as indicated below) pre-packed in to dry bags, ready to pack and launch once the group has met

As with previous SKGABC courses, L2 and L3 exams will assess your competencies while in a leadership role including paddling, decision making, leadership and group management as examples. You may also be asked to verbalize how you arrived at your decisions, and may be expected to carry out options without coaching from the group or instructors.

Preparation

Please come to exams ready to for the process, and with any clarifying questions in regards to assessment or otherwise ready to be presented at the beginning of the exam.

To ensuring you are prepared for your L2 or L3 exam, you must answer for yourself the 4 following questions:

- **Prepared:** Am I both physically and mentally ready for demands of leadership, critical decision making and response?
- **Gear:** Do I have the right equipment and supplies, appropriate for this examination?
- **Knowledge:** Have I revisited and reviewed the core areas of knowledge required, and can I communicate them in a way that demonstrates understanding?
- **Skills:** Am I able to comfortably and competently demonstrate the paddling and rescue skills required for this examination?

The following sections will outline the specifics for each of these questions. Ensure that you can say “Yes” to each of these before setting out for your exam.

Physical and Mental Preparedness

Much like guiding itself, exams can be stressful and uncomfortable with little down time. It is important that you feel that you are both physically up to the task of leading a group through Class 2 or 3 waters, as well as mentally ready for the stresses that accompany the responsibility.

Don't forget, though, in qualifying to take this exam, you have already put in a lot of time and practice to be there in the first place. Set yourself up for success through reviewing and rely on previous learning and practice.

Equipment and Supplies

In packing for an exam, Candidates are expected to have a professional level kit of sea kayak and camping equipment. Some items and their storage will be included in your evaluation. Key exam items to highlight are:

- *Sea Kayak Equipment:* kayak, skirt, PFD, paddle, spare paddle, pump, paddle float, throw bag, tow line(s), stirrup, flares, VHF radio, whistle, helmet, etc.
- *Immersion Gear:* wet suit or dry suit *not having immersion gear is unacceptable.
- *Camping Equipment:* tent, tarp, sleeping pad, sleeping bag, stove, fuel, pot, dishware, bathroom kit, personal clothing, etc.
- *Navigation Equipment:* chart(s) (# posted on website), tide and current information, compass, notebook, area information, etc.
- *Food and Water:* Each individual should prepare their own food for the the entirety of the exam. In addition, meals should be quick to prepare and consume with a busy exam schedule in mind. Guides should bring adequate water for themselves for the duration of the exam.
- *Additional Guide Specific Gear:* For example, first aid kit, hypothermia kit / plan, fire making kit /plan, seasick kit, thermos and guest 'extras', etc.

For further items, please consult the Gear List, accessible on the SKGABC Website.

Knowledge: Refining and Reviewing Testable Knowledge

All areas covered in the SKGABC Handbook are open to be tested on.

Typical areas of knowledge that are beneficial to review are:

- Weather theory:
 - Describe weather phenomena including large and small-scale features: high and low pressure systems, fronts, land and sea breezes, gap and corner winds, fog types, katabatic and anabatic winds, Arctic outbreaks, etc.
 - Observe and describe current local weather trends (e.g. cloud, wind, and precipitation) and the relevance to trip and route planning.
 - Access the marine weather forecast and interpret the relevance to trip and route planning.
 - Explain seasonal BC weather patterns
- Radio protocols and best practices

- Routine communications for logistics e.g. using appropriate language, clarity, brevity, precision, etc.
- Proper communication procedures for an emergency call to Coast Guard Radio or direct to RCC.
- Care and proper use of flares, including types, limitations, sequencing, and safe ignition.
- Alternate one-way signalling options e.g., smoke fire, signal mirror, strobe, EPIRB, PLB, etc..
- Navigation, Charts and Symbols, Compass use
 - Identify symbols and scale.
 - Use Chart One as a reference tool.
 - Plot appropriate route plans with distances and time estimates.
 - Follow route plans and adapt to conditions.
 - Fix location using natural ranges and magnetic Lines of Position.
 - Identify landmarks or waterways using the compass (chart to reality, and reality to chart).
 - Plot dead reckoning courses with bearings, distances and times.
 - Use Tide and Current Tables to predict tides and currents at primary and secondary ports and stations.
 - Use the Rule of Twelfths and the 50/90 Rule (or Rule of Thirds) .
 - Familiarity with basic collision regulations and right of way.
- Environmental Impact
 - Guidelines and strategies for minimizing group impact while travelling on the water (marine life) and in camp (erosion, waste, vegetation, fresh water, visual, fire, wildlife, etc.).
 - Proper human waste disposal (guidelines, strategies, concerns).
 - Proper food storage and kitchen etiquette (scavengers and large carnivores).
 - Harvesting considerations (regulations, client safety, and species/ecosystem impacts).
- Planning for tides and currents
- SKGABC and Transport Canada regulations

Skills:

It is important that you 'get out' sea kayaking prior to your exam, in addition to your regular guiding schedule. Practicing in dynamic waters means addressing your paddling skill 'edge' and sharpening your practice. This may mean seeking coaching or mentorship and planning

additional trips to paddle in dynamic surf and/or currents. It is important to practice a variety of rescues in dynamic waters prior to your L2 or L3 exam and recognize the application and versatility or limitations of various rescues or variations thereof.

Assessment

Assessment for your L2 or L3 exam will have a similar set up to your AOG and other previous courses. *Please see the SKGABC Guide Assessment form at the end of the document for reference.*

Assessment of exams is both summative (distinct assessment periods) and formative (assessed over the period of the exam), depending on the category. As exam periods are so short, it is typical for Examiners to provide feedback at the end of the exam period; however, this is up to the Examiners' discretion.

Summative Assessment Includes:

- Written Exam: multiple choice, short answer questions and tide and current calculations.
- Oral Exams:
 - Navigation and Chart Work, including the submission of a Route Plan
 - Radio and Communications
 - Weather Theory and Interpretation

The following assessment is either formative or summative, and is up to the discretion of the guide examiner:

- Strokes in water conditions of guide level
- Assisted and self rescues in water conditions of guide level
- Scenarios: major, minor and critical eye
- Leadership: including communication strategies, judgement and decision making, group management, navigation and scenario management
- Navigation and Route Plan

Physical Evaluation of Strokes and Skills

Specifically, the candidate will perform the following skills:

- Basic strokes: forward, reverse, stopping, forward and reverse sweeps with and without edging, underwater recovery draw, low brace and low brace turns
- Advanced Strokes: high brace, lean turns and sculling draws
- Demonstrates safe & effective control in moving water: eddy turns and ferry glides.

- Demonstrates controlled surf landings and launchings
- Lead a group through launch or landing procedures in waves

Rescue Evaluation

- Candidates will demonstrate 2 self-rescue techniques.
 - Self rescue with paddle float to the point of securing the skirt and beginning to pump out water within 2 minutes; use of stirrup optional
 - One other self-rescue without using a paddle float or other buoyancy aid (e.g., scramble, cowboy, side-saddle, re-enter and roll).
- Candidates will demonstrate 5 assisted-rescue techniques.
 - T Rescue.
 - Parallel Rescue.
 - Sling rescue / stirrup re-entry.
 - Scoop rescue.
 - Hand of God Rescue.

Towing Evaluation

- Candidates will demonstrate 3 towing or travel-assist techniques appropriate to different distances, sea conditions, and situations.
 - Stern carry a swimmer for 50 metres.
 - Open water boat switching.
 - Solo boat towing.
 - Tandem towing (in-line tow).
 - Contact towing.

Formative or ongoing assessment includes:

- Camp craft including tents, tarps, cooking, kitchen set up, leave no trace practices, fire building, hygiene, etc.
- Self care and client care

Please seek clarification with the Examiner(s) if you have any questions of assessment or process for feedback.

Pass, Conditional Pass and Fail

It is possible to receive one of three outcomes upon completion of the exam period: pass, conditional pass or fail. The breakdown for a pass and a conditional can be found on the below SKGABC Guide Assessment Form.

Pass

There are three required areas where a weak is not acceptable, and the candidate must receive sufficient skills and competency (5 or higher on the practical skill evaluation rubric): paddling skills, rescue techniques and leadership and judgment, including the practical scenario. If assessment of these three categories is less than 5, the candidate will not be eligible for a conditional pass. In both the practical scenario and the written exam, candidates must receive a passing score of 75% or higher. In addition, a full pass requires that candidates receive scores of 5 or higher in all practical skill assessment categories.

Assuming that there are no conditionals or outstanding documentation attached to an assessment, a passing candidate shall immediately be qualified at the guide level for which they have been assessed.

Conditional Pass

It is up to the discretion of the Examiner(s) to offer a conditional pass. A conditional pass may be offered if the candidate has no more than 2 categories (not including paddling skills, rescue techniques or leadership and judgement) with a score of 3-4. Any scores of 0-2 are not eligible for a conditional pass.

The responsibility of rescheduling a time and place with an examiner to meet the conditions and re-assessment post exam is up to the candidate themselves. Conditions must be met within a specified time period, typically within 6 or 12 months.

Arranging a time and place for a Conditional Pass re-examination is done by contacting the Executive Director, who will assist in finding an available Examiner for an on-water or theoretical re-examination, as appropriate. A fee for re-examination will be assessed in consultation with the Executive Director. While the fee is designed only to cover the Examiner's time and a minimal admin charge, it can still feel significant since most re-examinations are set up for individual candidates. If it is possible to have two Conditional candidates be re-examined by an Examiner at the same time, for instance, the SKGABC will support that to help reduce fees for the candidates.

If unsuccessful during the re-evaluation, candidates will be considered to have "failed." Failed candidates must wait 6 months before applying to retake the entire exam.

Fail

Keep in mind that failing an exam is not necessarily an indicator of future success as a L2 or L3 sea kayak guide. A fail is given if an assessment includes:

- Any categories scoring 0-2;
- 3 or more categories scoring 3-4;
- **Any** score below 5 in paddling skills, rescue techniques and leadership and judgment, including the practical scenario;
- A score of less than 75% on the written or oral evaluations;
- A Conditional candidate who, upon being re-assessed in the area of their conditional, does not satisfy their conditional, will be considered to have failed, and must retake the entire exam.

Failed candidates must wait a minimum of 6 months before applying to retake the entire exam at full price.

Common Exam Issues

Over time, Examiners have noticed common areas of improvements with aspirant L2 and L3 candidates.

Common exam issues include:

- Logbook technically qualifies candidate for exam, however they are a less well-rounded candidate due to limitations with locations, type of guiding or clientele. This can affect overall situational awareness and performance.
- Poor understanding and application of weather theory
- Sloppy technical paddling skills
- Struggling in current and surf conditions
- Underdeveloped cooking skills or poor adherence to backcountry food-handling safety
- Inappropriate equipment or failure of immersion gear (e.g. ripped drysuit gaskets)
- Tunnel vision on one style of rescue or decision process, where a variation or adaptation may be more effective in the situation.
- Safety priorities during rescues: Self, Unaffected Clients, Victim
- Crossing instructions, awareness, group formation and maintenance
- Lack of utilization of assistant guide in exam scenarios
- Familiarity with primary and secondary current calculations

Exam Cancellation

Exam cancellations are rare, but do occasionally happen. Examples of reasons for cancellations in the past have included extreme weather, Examiner injury or illness, or insufficient candidate numbers. When a challenge to an exam arises, all reasonable efforts are taken; for instance, a possible shift in location, replacing an Examiner, or occasionally running an exam with fewer than the usual minimum number of candidates - will be considered to support the exam going forward.

Candidate cancellation are subject to the following policies:

- Cancellations 30 days prior to the exam start date are entitled to a full refund.
- Cancellations 15-30 days prior to start date will lose \$100 deposit
- Cancellations less than 15 days prior to start date will be charged for the full cost of the exam.
- We may cancel exams if we do not get enough registrations at least two weeks prior to the start of the exam. In the case that an exam is cancelled by the SKGABC, participants are entitled to a full refund or may transfer their fees to a future exam at no additional charge.

Post Exam Participant Feedback

After completion, an electronic survey and feedback form will be emailed to you by the SKGABC. It is extremely valuable to the SKGABC, as well as to future exam candidates, to hear your feedback, even if you feel you don't have much to say. It helps us to uphold high standards and continued evaluation development of our examination process. Anonymized feedback will be made available to Examiners.

The SKGABC Executive and team of Guide Examiners wish you the very best in both your preparations and success in the examination process. We are all excited to have more competent and highly skilled, trained and certified SKGABC members and paddlers out there on the water!



SEA KAYAK GUIDES ALLIANCE OF BC- GUIDE ASSESSMENT FORM

CANDIDATE NAME:

CANDIDATE EMAIL:

DATE OF EXAM:
(DD/MM/YY)

GUIDE TRAINER/
EXAMINER NAME(S):
(Include first & last name)

LOCATION OF EXAM:
(Geographic Area e.g.,
Clayoquot Sound, Johnstone Strait)

LEVEL OF EXAM (Circle one): L1 AOG AOG UPGRADE L2 L3

PART 1 – PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT

Practical Skill Evaluation Rubric	
Score	Description
0 - 2	Candidate is unable to demonstrate any level of competency in the skills required.
3 - 4	Candidate can sometimes demonstrate competency in this skill, but it is not consistent and is below the standard expected for this level.
5 - 6	Candidate demonstrates sufficient skills to be adequate, but requires significant improvement before advancing further in the guide certification levels.
7 - 8	Candidate demonstrates competency at this skill, but should seek to improve their skills.
9 - 10	Candidate demonstrates complete proficiency at this skill. Either fully meets requirements (9) or exceeds requirements (10) for this level of evaluation.
N/A	Skill is not applicable or was not observed during this evaluation.

***Candidates require a minimum mark of 5 in all elements of the following 2 sections: Paddling Techniques, Rescue Techniques.**

***Candidates require a minimum total mark of 75% in the Leadership & Judgement section. (See Part 4 summary on page 2)**

Candidates may receive up to two scores in the 3 - 4 range in any other skill areas and receive a conditional pass at the discretion of the examiner.

Candidates that receive more than two scores in the 3 - 4 range or any scores of 0 - 2 are not eligible for a conditional pass.

PADDLING TECHNIQUES

BASIC TECHNIQUES	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
ADVANCED TECHNIQUES (Paddling In Current, Surf, Dynamic Strokes, Rolling)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

RESCUE TECHNIQUES

SELF RESCUES	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
ASSISTED RESCUES	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
TOWING/TRAVEL ASSIST	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

LEADERSHIP & JUDGEMENT *Practical Scenario* (any candidate receiving <5 in any of these *areas receives a fail)

*EMERGENCY RESPONSE (Scenario Management)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
*COMMUNICATION (Ongoing & Emergency)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
*RISK MANAGEMENT & ASSESSMENT (Prevention & Planning)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
*CRITICAL EYE (Situational Awareness)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
*PROFESSIONALISM/SELF CARE (Ongoing)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
*INTERPERSONAL SKILLS (Client Care & Conflict Resolution)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
*PREPARATION, PACKING, CHOICE OF EQUIPMENT, PRE-TRIP PLANNING	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

NAVIGATION

PILOTING (Practical Chart Use)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
ROUTE PLANNING (Distance, Travel Times, Lat/Long)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
COMPASS USE (Bearings LOPs, Triangulation)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

WEATHER

ACCESSING/RECORDING (Appropriate for Level)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
WEATHER THEORY (Concepts, Understanding)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
DECISION MAKING (Based on WX)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

EMERGENCY SIGNALLING & RADIO USE

FLARES (Theory & Use)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
VHF MARINE RADIO (Use & Theory)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
VHF MARINE RADIO (Emergency Signalling)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A



SEA KAYAK GUIDES ALLIANCE OF BC- GUIDE ASSESSMENT FORM

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AWARENESS												
LOW IMPACT PRACTICES, WASTE DISPOSAL, HARVESTING & WILDLIFE VIEWING REGULATIONS	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
CAMPCRAFT												
SHELTER, FIREBUILDING	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A

PART 2 - WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

SCORE: _____ OUT OF: _____ = _____% (Must Receive 75% To Pass)

If the candidate receives <75% they may retake the exam after a minimum of 6 months.

PART 3 - FEEDBACK

STRENGTHS:

ACTION ITEMS - (AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT):

PART 4 - SUMMARY

SCENARIO SUMMARY SCORE: _____ / 70 = _____% (Candidate must receive 75% in order to pass)

(See breakdown in Judgement & Leadership section)

MAJOR INCIDENT: _____ MINOR INCIDENT: _____ CRITICAL EYE: _____

THIS CANDIDATE: **MEETS / DOES NOT MEET** (Circle One) THE STANDARDS REQUIRED FOR THIS GUIDE CERTIFICATE LEVEL.

IF CANDIDATE DOES NOT MEET THE STANDARD REQUIRED, THE RECOMENDATION IS: (Circle One)

- **RE-TAKE THE ENTIRE EXAM AT A LATER DATE** (Required If Multiple Sections of the Assessment Are Below Standard)
- **RE-TEST ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS** (Allowed Only by Discretion of the Guide Trainer/Examiner. Include Details on the Sections of Assessment to Be Re-Tested Upon and the Date to be Assessed by - we recommend a retest within 3 months):

*Upon re-testing, if the candidate should fail to meet conditions, the candidate must wait the standard 6 months before re-taking the entire exam.

GUIDE TRAINER(S)/EXAMINER(S):

NAME:

NAME:

SIGNATURE:

SIGNATURE:

Re-Test Information
Completed By:
Date:
Recommendation: