

## Adventure Activities Licensing Authority

### AAALA Note: 5.17

*AAALA notes are produced by the AALA to provide information and guidance to adventure activity licence holders and other interested stakeholders*

**Date:** August 2013

**Subject:** Trickle-down Assessment

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**Issue:** Trickle-down is not a recognised way of assessing instructor competence.

1. 'Trickle down' is where a technical advisor 'approves' someone within a provider's organisation to carry out some of the technical advisors functions such as providing training, reviewing operating procedures, assessing competence, monitoring etc. Whilst this may be an appropriate way to proceed with some functions Guidance from the Licensing Authority [HSE/AAALA] on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (L77) does not recognise this approach when it comes to the assessment of an instructor's competence.
2. Paragraph 21 of L77 states:  
*"Appendix 2 sets out qualifications available from national awarding bodies that will normally demonstrate competence. The 'technical expert' column will help the licensing authority decide whether a provider has access to competent advice."*
3. 'Technical Experts' are commonly known as technical advisors. Generally these people have a higher level of award than the level at which they train and assess.
4. Paragraph 27 of L77 states:  
*"Where in-house training, rather than an externally assessed qualification, is the means by which the level of competence specified is assured, the training syllabus should be specified by, and the competence of trained staff assessed by, someone with the competencies to fulfil these roles for the equivalent national qualification."*
5. Note that someone other than the technical advisor can carry out training, monitoring, etc, but the technical advisor will normally carry out the assessment in person.
6. There are, however, a few exceptions allowed by paragraph 21 of L77:  
*"It is possible that someone with extensive relevant practical experience who does not hold the qualification in the matrix may also be competent to advise. A provider who relies on such a person will need to satisfy the licensing authority that the person is competent; the licensing authority will take account of the history of relevant experience and knowledge of relevant guidance material."*

7. Paragraph 20 of L77 also states:  
*“Providers should also take heed of the advice of relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs).”*

Thus where an NGB identifies the level of competence for assessors of its awards providers should either use someone with the stated level of qualifications and experience or someone with equivalent experience.

8. Providers therefore have two choices regarding who carries out an assessment:
- Use a technical advisor with the normally expected experience and qualifications; *or*
  - Convince the Licensing Service that they have someone with adequate relevant experience and qualifications to be their own technical advisor for that activity.
9. With a few exceptions, this will likely apply mostly to activities such as gorge scrambling, stand up paddleboarding, coastering, off-road cycling, etc. where either no technical advisor level award exists or where the activity represents a very small part of the technical advisor qualification, or where a technical advisor level of qualification is not universally available.
10. Low-level activities, such as challenge courses, low ropes courses, teambuilding, etc., where there is no technical equipment or a low skills requirement the role of technical advisor can be undertaken by an experienced Senior Instructor, Chief Instructor or similar practitioner.
11. This approach is referred to in Inspector Guidance Note (IGN) 5.6. See in particular section 5.
12. Statements of Competence for instructors assisting at a session are covered in IGN 5.6 section 9.

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