



# UKSS Backcountry Snowsport Leader Award Syllabus

## Backcountry Snowsport Leader (BSL)

The BSL is licenced to lead snowsports parties on mountain journeys out with of a patrolled environment. The award excludes terrain where technical equipment such as axe, crampons or rope may be in needed in addition to skis, boards, skins and ski crampons for safe travel. The conditions and terrain chosen for the activity should be such that allows the group to thrive in the environment as opposed to survive in it.

Candidates must prove their competency in the following criteria:

Crit. No.	Backcountry Snowsport Leader	
<b>1</b>	<b>Fitness Fuel &amp; Hydration</b>	
1.1	Demonstrate a suitable level of physical fitness to lead journeys for a range of groups in terrain appropriate to their award	Full day skinning and skiing/riding with a leader's rucksack with total ascent approx. 1500m
1.2	Maintain their energy levels by adequate fueling and hydrating throughout their journey	Throughout a full day skinning and skiing/riding with a leader's rucksack with total ascent approx. 1500m
1.3	Have an understanding of the nutritional demands their journeys place on their group and be aware of skiers/riders fuel and fluid intake	Relating to a full day skinning and skiing/riding with a leader's rucksack with total ascent approx. 1500m
1.4	Have an understanding of the physiological demands their journeys place on their group including the required components of fitness and energy systems used.	Relating to a full day skinning and skiing/riding with a leader's rucksack with total ascent approx. 1500m
<b>2</b>	<b>Personal Skiing/Riding Standards</b> These standards are such to allow the leader to maintain a broad attentional focus for the majority of the planned journey, accepting information from the snowpack/weather; terrain and the group to effectively manage the group.	
2.1	Minimum Standard required in black run angled terrain (30°) in favourable and unfavourable off-piste conditions.	<b>Speed.</b> Demonstrate a variety of speeds to inspire confidence in a group within appropriate terrain for the award, in ascent and descent. <b>Line.</b> Demonstrate a variety of line choices to inspire confidence in a group within appropriate terrain for the award, in ascent and descent. <b>Flow.</b> Demonstrate fluency & ease in ski performance in a variety of snow conditions; speeds and lines, in ascent and descent, both in personal performance and whilst leading groups.
<b>3</b>	<b>Skiing/Riding Technique knowledge and application in Leadership context</b>	
3.1	Identifying rider/skier skillset and drawing conclusions regarding route choice and management of the group	Use TIED model to effectively manage individuals within a group.

3.2	Knowledge of technically correct execution of ski/board techniques relevant to their award	Relevant to off-piste skiing in a variety of snow conditions
3.3	Apply their knowledge to achieve desired outcomes.	Achieve a flowing journey; allow for a wide variety of leadership styles to be used; empower skiers/riders to take on more exciting route options
3.4	Snowsports Touring Disciplines	Awareness of Leadership Challenges around different Snowsport touring disciplines.
<b>4</b>	<b>Clothing and Equipment</b>	
4.1	Carry sufficient equipment and tools for the planned terrain; conditions and group needs	For backcountry environments not requiring the use of axe and crampons by the group for safe passage
4.2	Have a working knowledge of a variety of current equipment and systems relevant to award	For backcountry environments not requiring the use of axe and crampons by the group for safe passage
4.3	Show and awareness of the main developments in recent Snowsport technology relevant to award	Relevant to backcountry touring
4.4	Use suitable equipment for the planned task and wear appropriate clothing for a leader as a role model.	For backcountry environments not requiring the use of axe and crampons by the group for safe passage
<b>5</b>	<b>Ski Tech &amp; Far From Help Repairs</b>	
	Demonstrate how to effectively perform appropriate repairs relevant to the environment of the award	
5.1	Binding Check	Able to correctly check binding adjustments on Alpine, Board, AT & Telemark ski equipment.
5.2	Binding/Ski/Board/Skin Repair	Carry appropriate tools & spares to effect emergency repair of a broad range of binding/boot/skin/ski/board systems
<b>6</b>	<b>Leadership &amp; Group Management</b>	
	Demonstrate the ability to lead & manage the group appropriately within the scope of the award	
6.1	The leader is a positive role model and aims to inspire others, establishing an agreed vision with the group.	Relevant to off-piste skiing/riding
6.2	The leader provides empathetic social support in a positive atmosphere	Relevant to off-piste skiing/riding
6.3	The leader looks to provide appropriately challenging experiences	Relevant to off-piste skiing/riding
6.4	The leader can safely use participant focused leadership styles	Relevant to off-piste skiing/riding
6.5	The leader provides satisfaction and promotes strong performance for individuals and the group.	Relevant to off-piste skiing/riding
6.6	fostering environmental awareness.	Relevant to backcountry touring
6.7	maintaining involvement, interest and enjoyment.	Relevant to backcountry touring
6.8	imparting fundamental technical skills where appropriate.	To facilitate a safe experience
6.9	demonstrate the personal skills and organisation to remain comfortable in the mountains in winter.	Remaining self-sufficient for a full day in a remote mountain environment
6.10	organise search and rescue for a lost member of the group.	For backcountry environments not requiring the use of axe and crampons by the group for safe passage
6.11	identify and minimise the risks created by the following hazards: loose and verglassed rock; snow bridges above streams and boulder fields; cornices; avalanche prone slopes; strong winds.	For backcountry environments not requiring the use of axe and crampons by the group for safe passage
6.12	Use attentional focus model and catastrophe model effectively to manage own and group's focus and psychological state	In a leadership context
6.13	Make good judgements in the best interests of the group	For backcountry environments not requiring the use of axe and crampons by the group for safe passage
<b>7</b>	<b>Snow &amp; Avalanche Knowledge/Skills</b>	
	Candidates should be able to, using a combination of information sources and personal observations, continually evaluate the terrain, snowpack, weather conditions and human factors to draw sensible educated conclusions regarding avalanche hazard and risk:	
7.1	identifying sources of avalanche information. Including BAA.	Mountain weather forecast SAIS forecast Synoptic charts
7.2	identifying the types of avalanche common in the UK.	identifying the types of avalanche common in the UK.
7.3	identifying common snowpack and grain types such as neve, graupel. etc.	identifying common snowpack and grain types such as neve, graupel. etc.
7.4	identifying how a change in weather conditions affects the snowpack.	Including rounding/faceting/melt freeze processing due to temperature gradients; precipitation (rain/new snow); wind.

7.5	understanding the significance of the published avalanche hazard forecasts on mountain travel and applying them.	Using knowledge gained to support route planning and decision making
7.6	understanding how avalanche hazard is influenced by weather conditions, and terrain and its importance when planning your journey	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.7	understanding how avalanche risk is influenced by people (human factors) and its importance when planning your journey.	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.8	differentiating between situations of significant avalanche danger and those of limited avalanche danger.	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.9	demonstrating the ability to plan a safe/appropriate route according to the conditions and the group.	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.10	demonstrating an ability to continually appraise snowpack stability, weather and human factors while journeying.	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.11	identifying possible wind slab and cornice formation on a particular slope as a result of snowfall intensity and wind direction.	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.12	interpreting snowpack and possible stability using a variety of field observations.	Recognising differences between forecast and observations during the journey or key places. Using this information to support decision making and leadership away from a managed environment
7.13	demonstrating safe and effective precautions when negotiating a slope that may be avalanche prone.	Understanding of safe travel techniques and how to apply them in a variety of situations
7.14	stating the actions to be taken if involved in an avalanche incident and organising a rescue & recovery for those buried in an avalanche using Transceiver; Shovel; Probe and other commonly carried equipment.	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.15	Be able to predict where good skiing/boarding conditions will be located	Relevant to backcountry touring
7.16	Be able to use basic decision support tools.	Such as Debonos 6 thinking hats; devils advocate; Ulysses contract etc...
7.17	Avalanche Rescue	Identify a multiple burial (2 victims) in under 8 mins using Transceiver Shovel and Probe in a 50m x 50m. Burials min 5m apart.  Organise an effective group rescue, including strategic digging techniques.  Have the experience and teaching skills to deliver the 15min TSP protocol
<b>8</b>	<b>Route Planning &amp; Navigation</b> Navigation on skis/board in winter can be very difficult and requires considerable practice. In addition to being able to navigate effectively in good visibility, in poor conditions, including darkness and whiteout, candidates should be able to safely and efficiently:	
8.1	Be proficient at planning and executing flowing journeys within the environment relevant to the award/ conditions/group	Relevant to backcountry touring
8.2	Identify their location by appropriate means at all times, using a map and compass.	Including consistent, efficient, accurate & precise relocation
8.3	Describe a range of navigational aids that can be useful at the planning stage as well as on the journey	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
8.4	demonstrate a practical awareness of the use, and limitations, of electronic navigation devices such as GPS, Smartphones etc.	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK

8.5	relate map to ground using either 1:25,000, 1:50,000 and other relevant scale maps, including piste maps.	Confident using a variety of UK maps
8.6	choose appropriate safe and efficient routes/navigation strategies between geographical features in poor conditions.	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
8.7	measure distance accurately using pacing, timing with an altimeter and detailed information from the map.	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
8.8	take and follow accurate compass bearings while skiing/boarding in poor conditions.	take and follow accurate compass bearings while skiing/boarding in poor conditions.
8.9	demonstrate navigational techniques appropriate to poor conditions.	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
8.10	demonstrate using a rope to safeguard progress in poor conditions around steep ground. Demonstrate use of the rope to aid navigation.	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
8.11	calculate the time required for winter journeys in the planning phase and select suitable routes appropriate to the activity, group and individuals.	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
<b>9</b>	<b>Mountain Weather</b>	
9.1	Have a working knowledge of weather in mountainous environments and its effect on the group	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
9.2	Obtain relevant weather forecasts	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
9.3	Interpret synoptic charts	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
9.4	Identify and interpret visual signs of changes in weather conditions	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
<b>10</b>	<b>Incident Management</b>	
10.1	Select and use appropriate personal and group emergency equipment	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.2	Be able to effectively organise rescue within the environment of the award	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.3	Be fully aware of rescue timescales and stages involved	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.4	Describe factors to consider to ensure late back procedures are robust	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.5	Knowledge of factors to consider when risk assessing a water hazard or burn line descent	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.6	Knowledge of skills needed to manage a group across a water hazard	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.7	Have a working knowledge of current technology available to assist with obtaining help in an emergency (e.g SPOT; In-Reach; PLB etc)	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.8	select suitable sites for emergency shelters	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
10.9	construct emergency shelters quickly and efficiently	Relevant to backcountry touring in the UK
<b>11</b>	<b>Cold Weather Injuries</b> Candidates should understand the causes and be able to avoid the physiological injuries that can occur in cold, wet and freezing conditions. They should take precautions to avoid injuries but, failing that, be able to identify the signs and symptoms and then apply first aid to treat the following:	
11.1	Mountain Hypothermia	Have knowledge of preventative measures. Identify signs and symptoms & management
11.2	Frostnip & frost bite	Have knowledge of preventative measures. Identify signs and symptoms & management
11.3	Heat Disorders	Have knowledge of preventative measures. Identify signs and symptoms & management
11.4	Snow blindness	Have knowledge of preventative measures. Identify signs and symptoms & management
11.5	Sunburn	Have knowledge of preventative measures. Identify signs and symptoms & management
<b>12</b>	<b>Access; the Environment and Legal Liabilities.</b>	
12.1	Accessing Ski Resorts	Have a working knowledge of the resort's rules; guidelines and principles for Snowsports Users.  Have a working knowledge of Mountaineering Scotland's advice for ski tourers in Ski Resorts
12.2	Mountain Access	Have a working knowledge of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and its relevance to backcountry skiing

12.3	Mountain Environment	Have and understanding of the Winter Mountain environment in the UK, to facilitate good decision making and group discussion within the group
12.4	Legal Liabilities	Understand the responsibilities of a group leader; the roles of insurance and duty of care, and maintaining currency.
<b>13</b>	<b>Snowsport Knowledge</b>	
13.1	Describe main characteristics of various Snowsport disciplines, including competitive freeride skiing.	Be able to offer advice and signpost information
<b>14</b>	<b>Security on Steep Ground</b> Be able to provide security for individual members of a party during ascent and descent of short sections of ground up to and including Grade 1 ground and cornices, using techniques appropriate to carrying rope; axe; skis/board; sling & carabiner.	
14.1	select and maintain suitable ropes, slings, karabiners and any other relevant equipment.	select and maintain suitable ropes, slings, karabiners.
14.2	construct appropriate anchors; snow and mixed terrain.	Construct a buried horizontal ski anchor
14.3	demonstrate rope management including knots, tying on and fluent handling while belaying.	Relevant to lowering direct from a buried horizontal ski anchor
14.5	use the rope to protect short climbing descents/ascents for the whole party.	Descent only, where 30m rope gets you OUT of trouble NOT into trouble
14.6	safeguard themselves in descent on steep ground.	Only terrain which allows leader to descend on skis/board without use of rope
14.7	communicate instructions	Utilise command style instructions as the environment demands