



## APA GUIDE QUALIFICATION STRUCTURE

	<b>TRAINEE GUIDE</b> May support but not guide on river trips. Registered with APA and logging days								
3 days	<b>River Guide Course</b> Three day course aimed at training candidates to function as part of the guide team								
17 days	Logged experience	Level One First Aid							
1 day	<b>River Guide Assessments</b> A written/oral theory assessment + a practical evaluation								
<b>RIVER GUIDE CERTIFICATE</b> <i>minimum guiding qualification</i> Qualified to function as part of guide team but <b>MAY NOT LEAD</b> ↓									
30 days	Logged experience								
3 days	<b>Trip Leader Workshop</b> Three day aimed at training candidates to lead the guide team. Practical assessment during course. Post course requirements to be completed.			<b>OPTIONAL SPECIALITY COURSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Rafting: 3 days, IRF accredited</b></li> <li><b>Safety Kayaking: 2 days</b></li> <li><b>Croccing: 2 days</b></li> <li><b>Tubing: 2 days*</b></li> </ul> <p><small>* N/A as a TL-UR specialisation</small></p>					
17 days	Logged Experience	Complete post-course requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compile an SOP document</li> <li>Complete theory workbook</li> </ul>	Level 3 First Aid						
<b>TRIP LEADER-RESTRICTED</b> Qualified to function as a trip leader <b>MAY LEAD</b> guide team on all rivers <b>up to and including class 3</b> ↓									
50 days	Logged experience (including 30 days in chosen speciality)	Level 3 First Aid							
1 day	<b>Trip Leader-Unrestricted Assessment</b> 1 day assessment in work situation on class 4 water, in chosen speciality								
<b>TRIP LEADER-UNRESTRICTED</b> <i>highest guiding qualification</i> Qualified to function as trip leader <b>MAY LEAD</b> on all trips in chosen speciality If rafting, this will link to IRF certification ↓				→ <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Trainee instructor</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Instructor - restricted</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">↓</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Instructor unrestricted</td> </tr> </table>	Trainee instructor	↓	Instructor - restricted	↓	Instructor unrestricted
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<b>SENIOR GUIDE</b> An honorary designation, awarded on application, to guides who have Trip Leader-Unrestricted status in 3 disciplines									

**When will this new system come into effect?**

The system was introduced in 2002

**What will happen to my existing qualification?**

It has lapsed but can be updated by doing a refresher to keep it current – see the table below for the equivalent qualification under the new system.

Old Qualification	New Equivalent	Changes
Level 1	River Guide	Not allowed to lead
Level 2	Trip Leader-Restricted	Allowed to lead on class 3 (up to and including)
	Trip Leader - Unrestricted	New qualification
Level 3	Senior Guide	NONE

**Will these new certificates have an expiry date?**

Yes, following international trends and complying with the requirements of the SA National Qualifications Framework, each qualification will have to be renewed or upgraded every three years. We have introduced a system of refresher courses for those who don't wish to gain a higher qualification than they already have.

**What should I do if I am a current Level 1 guide?**

Your qualification is equivalent to the 'River Guide' qualification i.e. you are not allowed to lead trips. If you are happy with this, you don't have to do anything except attend a refresher course every 3 years and keep your Level 1 First Aid certificate up to date. If you wish to lead trips, you will need to upgrade to Trip Leader – you'll need to attend a Trip Leaders workshop and comply with the various experiential and written requirements. These changes have been made in order to raise the level of safety awareness and training among trip leaders and to fit in with international standards.

**I did my Level 1 a long time ago, is it still valid?**

No, but if you do a refresher course you can 'renew' it.

**How long are the Refresher courses?**

One day, focussing on refreshing and updating your practical safety and rescue skills.

**Why was the system changed?**

The old Level 1 courses were 4 days long and attempted to pack a huge amount of information into that time. Feedback from the industry (mainly from operators) indicated that the trainees were not mastering all of the required skills properly as the course content was too varied and complicated. In addition, the 'gap' between the Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications was too wide and there was little incentive for guides to upgrade their qualification. In addition, developments in guide training internationally as well as locally meant that the SARA system needed restructuring in order to comply with new developments. Finally, as SARA transformed into APA, there was a growing need to develop a guide certification structure for other paddling disciplines – flatwater and ocean paddling, and to make sure that these were co-ordinated with the Swiftwater system so that guides could 'cross over' between disciplines easily.

**What does 'Restricted' and 'Unrestricted' mean?**

Following international standards, we have made a differentiation between leading on lower and higher graded rivers. The ability to lead on technical whitewater comes largely from experience and this is why the main difference between TL-R and TL-UR is logged days.

**It seems that by putting in the ‘Restricted’ category, you have made it more difficult for guides to progress to Trip Leader-Unrestricted than under the old ‘Level 2’ system.**

Actually, we have made it easier for guides qualify to lead trips. Under the new system, you only need 30 days in order to attend the workshop and another 17 days afterwards. (The old Level 2 system required 100 days.) Your practical assessment will be done during the course and your theory assessment will be based on work handed in after the course so there will no additional assessment fees. Also, the vast majority of rivers run commercially in this country are class 3 or lower so a TL-R is the highest qualification most guides will need.

**Why fit in with international standards?**

Firstly because the river industry overseas has had a lot of experience in dealing with safety and rescue and we can learn from their experience. Secondly, as more and more SA guides go and work overseas, it is important that our local qualifications measure up. Through the International Rafting Federation, our qualifications are accepted internationally, making it much easier for guides to get work overseas.

**What are the approximate costs involved?**

<b>Name of course</b>	<b>Who for?</b>	<b>Cost*</b>
River Guide course	Trainee guides	R1 390.00 Includes instruction, course materials, safety equipment, meals, accommodation, transport at river.
River Guide/Level 1 Refresher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trainee guides before assessment</li><li>• Existing Level 1 and River Guides wanting to keep their qualifications valid</li></ul>	R100.00
River Guide Assessment	Trainee guides	R325.00
Trip Leader Workshop	River Guides	R1200.00 includes assessment, instruction, course materials, safety equipment, meals, accommodation, transport at river.

\* Costs are approximate and will vary depending on Training Centre and what is included.

**Is there any way of reducing these costs?**

The courses are costed in such a way that the course fee and the logistics fee are separated. The course fee covers the cost of the instructor, the course materials, manual, rescue gear, APA licence fees and so on, while the logistics fee covers the costs involved in running the course – transport to the venue for the instructor, catering, camping fees, take-out and put-in fees, permits etc. One way for operators to reduce these costs is to subsidise the logistics costs, for example, by providing accommodation, catering, take-out vehicle etc at their own cost. The instructors are also able to provide training on an ‘in house’ basis but the burden of all the admin associated with a course then falls onto the organiser.

In comparison with other guide training courses on the market – Field Guide courses, tour guides courses and rock climbing guide courses, APA course fees are extremely reasonable. In fact, we have never received a complaint regarding the value for money of our courses from any guide who has completed a course.

In future, there will also be a mechanism to claim back some of the training costs through registering learnerships and claiming back from the skills levy paid on each employed guide, provided the instructor and the training is Theta registered (both APA Chief Instructors are accredited by Theta).

**What if my experience and qualifications don’t fit into this scheme and I feel I should be exempt from certain steps, for example, if I’ve been guiding overseas?**

We will judge each case on merit. You will need to approach us to discuss your case and will need to motivate your case with documentation such as logbooks, copies of any overseas qualifications etc.

### **Is the APA training mandatory?**

No, anyone has the option of going straight to an assessment if s/he feels that they are ready and have are proficient in the necessary skills.

### **Is APA Evaluation mandatory?**

It is not required by law but most state structures, including the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the Department of Water Affairs, have recognised APA as the industry recognised standard setting body and require guides to hold APA (or equivalent) qualifications. In some cases, this is already in force (for example through the guide registration process) and in others it will be introduced in due course (e.g. through the DWAF's recreational water use policy).

At the end of the day, it is your choice as a guide or as an operator to decide on what level of professionalism you regard as necessary to do your job safely and competently and to live with the consequences of that choice.

### **Why are my 'handlanger' days not recognised as logged days for the purposes of assessment.**

Ideally, the trainee should have ample time between his/her training and the assessment to practise and perfect the skills learned on the course. APA has always been flexible in this area, though and will allow trainee guides to be assessed even though they do not have the recommended number of days. In our experience, however, it is very difficult to pass the assessment if the trainee has not adequately practised the skills and knowledge on river so it's often counter productive to rush into an assessment.

### **What about APA membership?**

You'll need to be a paid up APA member in order to attend any courses or assessments.

### **Why bother with APA training and assessment, why can't we return to the 'old days' when training was done in house by operators and guides could lead trips with no formal qualification or just an entry level certificate?**

Firstly, guiding as a profession has changed from those days. Guides today are recognised as professionals and it is universally acknowledged that they need to be trained and competent in safety & rescue and group management. Legally, guides have a duty of care towards their clients and if they are not properly equipped with the correct skills and equipment, they are failing in this duty. Remember that the whole emphasis on guide training is preventative – equipping them with knowledge and techniques to avoid any incidents as well as to deal with incidents should they occur. In other words, we are training them for a situation that hopefully will never happen. Thus it may seem that some of the training is not relevant, particularly on rivers regarded as 'easy'. History has shown us, however, that serious incidents can happen at any time and on any type of water and if the guide is not prepared to deal with it in the best possible manner, there may be significant legal, financial and not least, moral implications.

The bottom line is that it is more complicated to become a guide today but this is a function of the changing tourism industry and is not something imposed by APA to make your life more difficult. The paddling industry has to transform itself to meet these changing demands.

It is also important to recognise that the training system has to benefit the guides themselves. River guiding is by its nature a nomadic occupation – guides need to be qualified to work on rivers anywhere in the country and overseas, not just their 'home' river.

### **When I registered with the Department of Tourism, I heard that I have to undergo an NQF or Theta assessment in due course. How does this fit in with the APA system?**

The APA system is designed to link easily with the NQF system. See the table below for more information. There are various problems with the Theta system and we will keep all APA members up to date about what they need to do.

## HOW THE APA QUALIFICATIONS RELATE TO THE NQF UNIT STANDARDS

APA QUALIFICATION	NQF UNIT STANDARD	ASSESSMENT REQUIRED
River Guide	Assist a Guided Paddling Exp.	RPL*
Trip Leader – Restricted	Conduct a Guided Paddling Exp.	RPL*
Trip Leader - Unrestricted	Conduct a Guided Paddling Exp.	RPL*

- RPL refers to Recognition of Prior Learning – i.e relevant prior training, assessment and experience will be accepted. The APA system is designed to meet the various assessment criteria of the Theta and NQF so that guides will not need to be re-trained or re-assessed from scratch. The process of RPL is quite admin intensive for both the trainee and the assessor so there will be an additional assessment fee involved.

### **At present, what do I need to do to guide legally in South Africa?**

All guides need to be registered with their provincial Tour Guide Registrar (contact APA for the full list). In order to register, you will need a valid & relevant APA qualification, First Aid and a letter from your APA assessor. Contact APA for more info.