



Marlow Rowing Club

Foot Steering Proficiency

Version	2026/4
Status	Approved March 2026. This is a club rule under Article 65 of the Articles of Association and binding on members
Documents Replaced: This document replaces the following documents which will cease to have effect from the date of this document:	Previous, unimplemented, coxing & steering proficiency award

Introduction

The Foot Steering Award is a single-tier award to demonstrate that someone who is foot-steering a boat (primarily 2-, 4x and 4-) is capable of doing so. The ability to steer a 1x or 2x is dealt with by the Sculling Proficiency Award. There are separate Sweep and Coxing qualifications.

The River Access & Navigation Safety Policy [Marlow RC - River Access & Navigation Safety Policy](#) contains rules about who can boat in what conditions, and whether a qualified steersperson is required.

Pre-Conditions

Passing the club Safety Training Modules is a pre-requisite of any award under this scheme and the assessor under this scheme is free to re-test any part of the navigation knowledge and fail candidates under this scheme if they do not know the content.

You must have an up-to-date Swim Test/Capsize Drill.

You must have adequate vision and hearing to command a boat.

Assessors

Steering Assessors will be appointed by the Captain and will usually be coaches. Coaches should not assess their own squads, unless by agreement with the Captain.

Record Keeping

Steering Assessors will be responsible for informing the designated Safety Records Admin (cc the Safety Officer) when they approve the award.

Appeals and complaints

The Scheme is administered by the Captain, the Safety Officer, and the Committee. Appeals, complaints, and comments should be addressed to the Captain through the squad representative.

Establishment

This is the first edition of this scheme, so the following transitional provisions apply:

- It is recognised that there will be many persons who already have the skills being assessed under this award.
- Squad Coaches will be asked to provide a list of competent steerspersons from their squad. It will be the responsibility of the coach to confirm that they have demonstrated the ability to steer a crew boat safely and competently under both green and amber conditions, day and night. Those nominated will be reviewed with the Captain ahead of being awarded the Steering Award.

Prior Experience

The Steering Assessor may take into account previous experience for those seeking assessment who have significant steering experience. The following standards are the minimum to be met:

- Win as a steersperson in sweep boat at a BR Junior, Senior or Masters Championship Level Event as evidenced in the British Rowing Almanac, or
- Qualified or pre-qualified for HWR, HRR sweep event, or
- GB Talent Pipeline as a steersperson - trialist and above

Training and Assessment

The primary focus is:

1. Can a candidate control a boat using foot steering and, if insufficient, pressure and/or crew command; and
2. Can a candidate do so in complex situations such as higher flow and/or overtaking.

Training a new steersperson:

- The squad coach, Captain or Chairman is aware and has agreed.

- A coach in launch 1:1 supervises the boat and can give commands to deal with steering issues.
- The outing is during daylight hours only and when the conditions are Green.
- If there are boat positioning issues during the outing then it must be cut short and the crew assisted to return to the club safely.

Below lock approval

This is a single-tier award and there is no separate below-lock endorsement, but candidates are expected to know the circulation patterns and risks below the lock when questioned. Members should exercise common sense when steering - the river below the lock has different hazards and while the technical skill is the same, you should not steer through or below the lock for the first time without launch cover or assistance from others who know the stretch.

Steersperson Award

Before seeking assessment, candidates should have completed a minimum 100 km (28 loops of Marlow stretch) steering a 4-/4x/2- either under the supervision of a coach, or prior to the introduction of this award scheme. The coach will decide whether a candidate is ready to be assessed.

Candidates for the award should be referred to the River Access and Navigation knowledge noted in the appendices before presenting for assessment.

Candidates must complete the **On Land Assessment** (Appendix 2) with the Assessor, even if the assessment was previously passed. Candidates can be failed on the whole assessment for failing this element as all steerspersons must have a strong grasp of the River Access & Navigation safety policy.

Assessors may fail candidates if their vision or hearing do not appear adequate to steer safely.

On Water Practical Assessment

1.Boating

- Demonstrate the ability to provide clear crew commands to manage the handling of a boat from the rack onto the water without damage to any equipment.
- Identify, keep a look out for, and not create hazards on the hard and pontoons (ice, other users, duck poo, blade placement).
- Demonstrate an understanding of and check the safety features on a boat before boating (heel restraints, bow balls, and hatches and steering mechanism).
- Show how the steering can be adjusted while on the river if the boat is not running in a straight line.
- Demonstrate through clear commands the ability to get the crew into the boat, leave the pontoon safely and cross the river correctly.
- Demonstrate the ability to return to the pontoon following the appropriate circulation pattern and disembark safely.
- Set up trestles to clean the boat and return the boat and blades safely to their designated racks. Secure the boathouse.

2. Navigating

This part of the award will be assessed over one full loop of the Marlow stretch.

- a) Steer a course following the appropriate circulation pattern, maintaining the appropriate position on the river.
 - b) Show the ability to both foot and pressure steer (to the extent relevant to the boat class).
 - c) Demonstrate turning at the correct points as indicated by the circulation pattern, using a wide arc and/or spin turns as appropriate.
 - d) Show ability to make clear calls to the crew to execute an emergency stop and a gentle run off.
 - e) Demonstrate the ability to make clear commands to start and stop a piece of work and steer the boat in a straight line while paddling firm for 250m.
 - f) Demonstrate overtaking and moving correctly to be overtaken, using the Assessor's launch as the overtaken or overtaking vehicle.
 - g) Demonstrate the ability to steer alongside the launch holding an appropriate line.
 - h) Throughout the test, be seen to keep a good lookout and appropriately respond to other river users demonstrating clear warning calls to them when necessary.
 - i) Demonstrate steering position under night rowing conditions (this element does not have to be done at night - merely to demonstrate what the process is).
 - j) Give clear commands to back the boat down.
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Appendix 1 River Access and Navigation

In particular, the Candidate should show a thorough knowledge of the following:

1. Safety Lights

- a) Know the stream conditions that initiate a safety light change to:
 - i. Amber
 - ii. Red.
- b) Know where you would obtain information on stream conditions.
- c) Know the water temperatures that initiate a safety light change to both amber and red and the consequence on allowable boat size. Know how to determine the water temperature.
- d) Know the fog protocol and what to do if fog descends while boated.
- e) Know the thunder and lightning protocol and what to do if thunder and lightning appear while boated.
- f) Know to make a dynamic risk assessment before boating.

2. Circulation Pattern

- a) Know the circulation pattern and the type of turn that should be executed at each turning point under green conditions.
- b) Know how the circulation pattern changes under amber conditions.
- c) Know where "race pieces" should stop at both the top end and the bottom end of the Marlow stretch.

3. Visibility/ Night/ Early Morning Rowing

- a) Know what boat lights are needed and where they should be placed.

- b) Know that during dusk and dawn conditions Hi Vis– not fluorescent - is required to be worn by at least bow and stroke.
- c) Know to steer a course tighter to the bank when visibility is low.

4. Capsize

Explain the safety procedure of how to try to avoid capsize and what to do in the event of a capsize.

5. Incident Reporting

Know that incidents should be reported as soon as possible on British Rowing website.

Appendix 2 On Land Assessment Sheet

Element	Outcome	Comments
Safety light changes		
1. Flow		
2. Temperature		
Protocols		
3. Fog protocol		
4. Thunder/lightening protocol		
Circulation pattern and changes		
5. Green		
6. Amber		
Rowing in the Dark		
7. Lights		
8. Hi Vis		
9. Steering line		
General		
10. Pontoon hazards		
11. Capsize protocol		
12. Describe a ferry glide		

Appendix 3 On Water Practical Assessment Sheet

Element	Outcome	Comments
1. Safe boat handling from rack to water		
2. Boat safety features		

3.Safe Embark		
4.Disembark and safe return of boat to rack		
5.River position, keeping a look out and calls to crew/ river users		
6.Circulation pattern Turning points and type of turn		
7.Overtaking		
8.Emergency stop		
9. Firm paddling		
10.Night rowing steer line.		
11.Back down		

Appendix 4 Useful links

<https://www.marlowrowingclub.org.uk/members/safety-information/>

<https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/the-coaching-stream/rower-development-guide/>

<https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/club-support/club-governance/club-safety/incident-reporting/>