

STUDENT HANDBOOK AND CODE OF CONDUCT

For industrial height safety and vertical rescue contexts

Terms and conditions (Please read carefully).



Introduction:

Congratulations on your decision to enrol on a nationally accredited course.

The RTO (registered training organisation) conducting your training and assessment is Professional Association of Climbing Instructors Pty Ltd (hereinafter PACI).

PACI has been operating since 1996. PACI is the longest continuously operating RTO specialising in all forms of industrial work activities involving risk of falls from height.

You will learn technical skills to use a fall protection system under the guidance and supervision of a competent and experienced PACI instructor. Our vision is to train and equip people with real-world skills that are relevant to their particular occupational context.

PACI training philosophy is to place a strong focus on practical skills development.

All courses consist of the following mix of training content:

1. Theory = 20% of content (this may vary according to the complexity of training).
2. Practical skills development = 80% of content.

At the end of training, there is final assessment to determine if competency has been achieved.

Context for using a fall protection system:

When people say “I work at height” – what does that mean exactly?

There are many different work contexts – and each context involves different types of PPE and different types of hazards and risks.

PACI defines ‘working at height’ as follows:

There is a risk of falling from one level to another (with a reasonable chance of injury) and a fall protection system is required.

The ‘best’ (or optimal) fall protection system for a particular work context is one of the key points that will be covered during your training and assessment.

Fall protection systems are always used within a specific context. Contexts include:

- ☐ EWP (boom type EWP with boom length ≥ 11 m, or a crane lifted work box)
- ☐ Scaffold erection/dismantle (need fall protection while scaffolding)
- ☐ Roof work (residential roofs)
- ☐ Roof work (industrial metal roofs)
- ☐ Tower structures (eg comms/radio towers, wind turbines, energy transmission, etc)
- ☐ Fixed plant and machinery
- ☐ Mobile plant / Mobile fleet (eg large excavators, large dump trucks, etc)
- ☐ Steep slopes, batters and embankments
- ☐ Natural cliffs
- ☐ Containers (stevedoring) – stacked or single height
- ☐ Rolling stock (rail)
- ☐ Facade access – including working around open penetrations and exposed balconies

Your industrial height safety training and assessment will be within the context of one, or a combination of these contexts.

For students enrolled in Vertical Rescue training:

Vertical rescue training is intended to equip individuals with specialist knowledge and skills so they can be an effective member of an Emergency Response Team (ERT) within a public safety context. Training can also be delivered within the context of an emergency response crew located at a mine site, or a construction site, or an established and operating industrial production site.

Vertical rescue knowledge and skills is always applied within a particular environment context. Students who successfully complete the course are issued with a Statement of Attainment that identifies the 'scope' in which they can operate.

Examples of Scope:

- ☐ natural surfaces (vertical cliffs)
- ☐ caves (with vertical access and egress – ropes required for access)
- ☐ canyons (with flowing/swift water, and also dry canyons)
- ☐ fixed plant and machinery
- ☐ mobile plant / mobile fleet
- ☐ roof surfaces
- ☐ vessels/ships (eg accessing cargo holds)
- ☐ stacked shipping containers
- ☐ lift wells inside multi story buildings
- ☐ tower structures (eg communications towers, energy transmission towers, etc)
- ☐ cable-ways / gondolas / chair lifts
- ☐ single pitch situations
- ☐ multi pitch situations (generally on natural cliffs)

Competency in one environment does not infer automatic competency to operate in a different environment. Each environment requires specific knowledge and skills – particularly with regard to building anchor systems, patient access issues, and dealing with the hazards and risks which change for each situation. For example, at an industrial site with fixed plant and machinery, there will not be loose/falling rock, or the requirement to use natural tree anchors.

Privacy laws:

All RTO's are required by law to collect personal information from each and every student. This information is uploaded to a national database every year. That database is used to measure the performance of Australia's national Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. Your personal information is not sold to advertisers or private companies – it is protected under Australia's Federal privacy laws. Part of the information is fed into the USI database where students can view their qualifications.

Intellectual property (Copyright) laws:

As a student enrolled on a PACI course, you will be granted permission to use PACI intellectual property. However, the use of PACI intellectual property is for personal use only, and is limited to supporting your learning. Commercial or business use is not permitted unless a licensing agreement has been approved and signed. Profiting from PACI intellectual property is forbidden unless you have express written permission and have paid licencing fees.

The use of PACI intellectual property is not a *right* – it is a privilege that is granted.

Pre-course preparation:

Depending on which course you are enrolled on, there may be a requirement to complete some self-study material before course commencement. This is particularly true for all rope access and vertical rescue training because it is more complex than general work-at-height activities. Any courses that involve assessment in tying knots requires pre-course practice. Knot tying is a perishable skill – and your ability to tie a knot correctly is crucial for safety.

The more effort you are willing to invest prior to commencement of training, the more you will gain from the overall learning experience. Cramming all of your learning into the tight time-frame and schedule of a course creates stress and anxiety. By investing effort outside of class contact time, you reduce the steepness of the learning curve and enhance your subject matter knowledge, skills, and safety (including the safety of your work colleagues).

If you are enrolled in rope access training:

[] download the PACI knot study guide and PACI Protocols.

Link: <https://www.paci.com.au/knots.php>

[] practice tying knots – you will develop your memory and pattern recognition skills.

[] download and complete the knot exam paper (this is a core exam paper).

[] Rope access: ISO 22846 and Safe work Australia guidelines for Rope access.

https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-06/guide_to_managing_risks_of_industrial_rope_access_systems_1.pdf

For all other types of training:

[] download and complete exam papers relevant to your training.

[] The **PACI protocols** is a primary reference document for all learning.

The exam papers are designed to elicit critical thinking and promote development of knowledge and understanding through problem solving.

If you can't determine an answer for a question, skip that question and move on to the next question. Do not abandon an exam paper merely because you can't answer one question!

By completing exam papers outside of class contact hours, you reduce the amount of time spent in a classroom and maximise opportunities for practical skills development. Students gain more from real practical skills development outside of the classroom environment.

Learning resources to support your training and assessment:

There is a significant volume of downloadable materials freely available on the public downloads section of the PACI website. Although it is free-of-charge, it is not free of copyright restrictions!

The PACI course web page is an important pit stop for student learning and students should thoroughly review all of the content on this site.

All of the content is in Adobe PDF format, and can be downloaded and saved to your preferred electronic device for reference.

Link for downloadable content: https://www.paci.com.au/downloads_public.php

(click on 'industrial courses' if you are enrolled on any form of industrial height safety training).

The learning process is a two-way street; this means students are expected to make an effort to manage their own learning.

All training is underpinned by the PACI protocols - and so that document is fundamental to your learning (content is arranged in alphabetical order, just like a dictionary).

Logistics:

Training may be delivered on site at your workplace or, it may be delivered offsite at a training facility. In the majority of situations, the best learning environment is at the actual workplace, such as on a real telecommunications tower or on an industrial roof surface.

[] For onsite training, PPE must be worn (must follow all site PPE rules)

[] For offsite training, clothing requirements still apply (check with your instructor)

In general, we limit the maximum number of trainees to 8 (but this might vary in some cases).

Duration of training varies according to scope and complexity of skills – for example, rope access training is more complex than using fall protection in a boom type EWP.

Daily training hours: (check with your instructor as timings may vary)

In general, daily course timings are:

[] Start: 07:00am

[] Finish: 5:00pm

#morning tea break is normally 15-20 minutes (unless site rules apply)

#lunch break is normally 30 minutes duration (unless site rules apply)

NOTE: These timings may vary according to site rules and how the class is progressing.

Earlier starts may be necessary if anything has caused delays.

For example, inclement weather may cause delays or even postponement.

The nominal duration of training is determined from historical track records based on how long it takes to present the course content. This is also in consideration of the learning rate of the average student where reasonable practice time is allotted before final assessment.

Note that all outdoor training schedules may be affected by local weather conditions.

Nominal duration of training for some courses: (duration may vary – check with your instructor)

[] Generic work-at-height training = 1 full day

[] Tower climbing and rescue = 2 full days

[] Roof access training = 2 full days

[] Rope access training = 5 days

Personal logistical checklist for all courses:

- [] Training site venue/location: Check with your instructor. There may be travel time to access your site, this needs to be planned for.
- [] BYO lunch and water to training sites (particularly outdoor locations).
- [] Prepare and pack wholesome foods that boost your energy and provide nutrition.
- [] Wear clothing and footwear appropriate that meets site rules, and is also suited to the environment and local climate (no thongs/flip flops or bare feet permitted).
- [] Be sun smart if training is outdoors – apply sunscreen.
- [] Wear sunglasses to reduce glare and eye strain in bright sunlight.
- [] Bring a notebook and pen (this will enable you to record new ideas and new concepts).
- [] You may need to bring your electronic device to the course (check with your instructor).

Scope of training:

In general, the training you receive can be universally applied to any site (under similar conditions and contexts to those under which you were trained).

Exception: In some special cases, a student may request that their training is 'site-specific'. This means that all knowledge and skills are valid only for one particular site and fall protection context.

Assessment:

Your knowledge and skills will be assessed to determine if you have reached the required level of competency. Students need to be able to setup and use a fall protection system, and perform a simulated task without the assistance of others. During an assessment, the assessor will not explain how to perform a skill or give step-by-step instructions to perform a task. All assessment criteria are linked to the various source 'units of competency':

- [] General work at height: <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/RIIWHS204E>
- [] Tower climbing and rescue: <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/ICTTCR203>
- [] Vertical rescue (public safety): <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/PUASAR032>
- [] Rope access: Assessment will combine elements of working at height together with the ISO 22846 standards.

Note: ISO standards are not free, and have strict copyright protection. If you want a personal copy of the ISO rope access standard, you will need to purchase it separately.

Results of your assessment is either 'competent at time of assessment' or; 'not yet competent'. Students are normally separated during assessment - for example, you will have to tie knots, build anchor systems, and deploy ropes on your own (without assistance from anyone). Your instructor will assess your performance against explicit criteria, and you either can perform to the required standard, or not.

All students need to be aware that payment for a course does not mean entitlement to receive a qualification. It is expected that all students will apply themselves and make an effort to learn and pass the course. Students who choose not to make any effort to learn and not apply themselves will likely fail.

There is no refund given to students who fail (ie assessed as not yet competent).

PPE and Equipment:

At time of booking, it will be stipulated who is providing PPE and equipment for the training. In most instances the employer will supply all student PPE and equipment for the duration of training. However, in some cases, your instructor may provide PPE and equipment for general group use during training. This may affect the quoted price.

At time of booking, you should notify your instructor if you don't have any of your own PPE and you need to borrow/hire equipment for the course.

In general, all students will be required to have and use:

[] harness that is fit for its intended application (eg tower climbing harness, rope access harness, etc) – you need a harness that is suited for your particular work context.

[] helmet (with secure chin strap)

[] lanyard (suited to the type of training – for example, a dual leg lanyard is required for tower climbing courses).

You will be responsible for any equipment that is in your care during training.

You will be liable for any wilful, and/or intentional misuse, and/or loss of PPE and equipment that is in your care. All PPE and equipment that your instructor provides will meet relevant PPE manufacturing standards (eg AS / EN / ISO / ANSI etc).

Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN):

All PACI courses are taught in the English language.

Because safety is at stake, all trainees must be able to speak and understand English.

When working in close proximity to exposed edges where there are no safety hand-rails or fences, spoken (oral) safety instructions may be given *urgently* and there is an expectation that students will immediately comply. Student safety is a priority and spoken safety instructions and warnings must be clearly and correctly understood. Gravity cannot be isolated - and its effects are immediate and unforgiving.

Prior to commencement of training, all trainees must download and complete the LLN self-assessment. The results of this self-assessment is reviewed by your instructor who will determine what (if any) LLN support you may require.

If you are hearing impaired, this could present safety challenges because imminent threats (eg loose or unstable rock, falling objects) can materialise without prior warning in the outdoor environment. Immediate spoken (oral) safety warnings may not be heard, with catastrophic consequences. In the same way, students who do not speak or understand English may be at risk if immediate spoken safety warnings are given but not comprehended. A skilled translator may not be able to relay and translate time critical safety warnings to bring imminent dangers under control.

Students who are undertaking rope access training will need to read and interpret technical documents such as Standards and Codes of Practice. These students will need to be able engage with others in a meaningful dialogue and deliver technically accurate safety briefings and post activity debriefings.

Student code of conduct:

All students are expected to listen to instructions and respect the advice given by their instructor.

Failure to do so will expose you to serious risk of injury and/or death.

PACI has a zero tolerance policy toward abusive and/or rude and/or disruptive behaviour.

Students who intentionally (wilfully) fail to follow instructions will be removed from the course (no refund is given).

Your instructor is similar to a referee/umpire on a sports field - never argue with an umpire!

When people get hot and tired, they can become easily irritated and lose their temper. On all competency-based courses, there will be some pressure to perform - and the role of the instructor is to train and assess.

If you find yourself starting to go down the path of becoming irritable - you should take 5 minutes time-out and retreat to re-hydrate and 'regroup' your composure.

Never direct any threatening or abusive behaviour toward your instructor (ie the 'umpire') - as that only causes conflict and disruption.

All courses involve some form of assessment to determine if competency has been achieved. There is pressure to perform. Some people develop a stress response to being assessed, and in some cases become belligerent or emotional. Nobody likes to be told that they did not achieve competency but, if this does occur, it does not warrant contentious and/or quarrelsome behaviour. Some people seek to apportion blame to others for their own mistakes rather than accepting responsibility for their own actions. Learning often occurs because of mistakes – and this provides opportunities to try again using the experience of past actions as a guide.

Any form of violence or threatening behaviour either toward your instructor or other students is not tolerated and will trigger police (law enforcement) intervention.

Students who become abusive and/or engage in disruptive behaviour will be removed from the course and a refund is calculated based on % of the course completed (eg 50% refund if 50% of course is completed).

Criminal conduct will void any right to a refund.

Plagiarism:

Some courses require students to hand in exams and written assignments.

All assignments and/or exam papers must be your own work, and not the work of someone else. If caught plagiarising, you will receive an automatic 'NYC' result. RTO's are no different to universities in that plagiarism is not tolerated or accepted.

Fitness to undertake training and assessment:

If you have a medical condition that could place you or others at risk - you have a duty to disclose (eg epilepsy, severe asthma, severe reaction to bee or insect stings, angina, infectious disease, etc).

Some types of training require a higher degree of fitness and agility. For example, rope access and tower climbing requires a higher degree of fitness and agility.

Performing vertical rescue skills may be strenuous and require students to exert themselves.

Students enrolled in training that requires vigorous physical exertion should not have a history of heart attacks, fainting, dizziness, vertigo, back pain/injury, hernia, etc. Most training involves being suspended in a harness at height – and if you have a condition that makes you susceptible to injury or at risk of illness, you should seek medical advice before attending the course.

Summary: If you have any medical condition that could place either yourself or others at risk during training, you have a duty to disclose, and you must obtain a medical certificate that grants approval to undertake the planned training.

Students must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or any form of substance abuse while undertaking training activities.

If you are found to be under the influence of drugs, alcohol and/or illicit substances, you will be removed from the course, and no refund will be given.

Heavy students

All PPE used for working at height has weight limits imposed by manufacturers.

As a general rule, low stretch and static ropes are tested with a 100kg mass. If you weigh significantly more than 100kg, you will obviously be placing much higher loads on your rope(s) in the event of a fall.

Most industrial harnesses are limited to a maximum body weight of 140kg.

Portable industrial ladders are rated to 120kg – some manufacturers warrant up to 150kg.

In rope access work, some devices may be close to their working limits when performing rescues with very heavy patients – and energy absorbers will need to be capable of handling 200kg+ loads.

If you are very heavy (120kg+) and have concerns, please contact your instructor for additional safety information.

Fees and Charges:

All RTO's are bound by strict rules governing the protection of your training investment – which is outlined in the Standards for RTOs (VER 2015).

If the RTO goes out of business or liquidates during your training, your course fees are protected. If you had paid a deposit in advance, that deposit is protected.

The maximum allowable deposit that can be pre-paid in advance by a student is AUD \$1500.00. If the RTO and/or your instructor cease trading before service delivery, you will be entitled to a refund of that deposit.

Different instructors will charge different fees depending on their geographic location and business running costs. For example, in some localities, instructors may have to pay higher local council fees for business permits and licences. Each State/Territory of Australia has different fee structures for commercial operators – and these fees affect business operating costs.

All course fees are payable in \$AUD (Australian currency), unless it is explicitly made clear in writing that a different currency will apply.

RPL and flexible learning:

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is offered on all courses. If you intend to apply for RPL, this means you believe you are already competent and don't require training. If this is the case, you can proceed directly to the final assessment phase of the course. However, if you fail the assessment, you will not receive a refund.

Student who intend to apply for RPL will need to complete an application and submit evidence of their competency. Acceptable evidence includes (list is not exhaustive):

[] qualifications issued by an RTO or educational institute (must be authenticated).

[] certificates issued by an industry body (must be authenticated)

[] logbook entries detailing performance of a task (cannot be self-authenticated)

[] statutory declarations signed by a Justice of the peace or authorised person

For all RPL applicants, you may be subject to a **VOC** (verification of competency) assessment. RPL is granted/denied on a case-by-case basis.

Using fall protection systems at height carry significant potential for death or serious disabling injuries. Even though you may produce a 'certification' – some form of in-field (on site) verification is usually required. Your knowledge and skills must also be 'current' (ie recent) because many roping skills are perishable (ie your knowledge and skills deteriorate over time). Periods of inactivity longer than 12 months are often a strong indicator that your skills may have deteriorated.

A VOC assessment will be structured as 'show me'. That is, the assessor will request that you demonstrate your skills. You either can perform, or not. A VOC assessment is not free – and there are no refunds if you receive a 'NYC' result.

Refund policy:

There are **no refunds** given **if you fail to achieve the required standard by course completion** (ie you received an 'NYC' result).

When you enrol on a PACI course, you are deemed to have **consented** to run the risk of losing your investment if you 'fail' (ie receive an NYC result).

To avoid this risk, you need to apply yourself 100% and practice your skills. You need to spend time practice tying knots outside of class contact time (you can't expect to learn how to tie knots proficiently only within the time frame of the course)

[] If you fail to prepare - this is the same as planning to fail!

[] Payment of course fees is not a guarantee that you will automatically 'pass'

If you are removed from a course because you have become abusive and/or disruptive toward your instructor or supervising staff, you may be entitled to a partial refund according to % of course completed. For example, if you were removed from the course at the half-way point, you may be entitled to a 50% refund. Violent and/or criminal conduct will void any right to a refund, and the police will be contacted.

If you become ill during training and have to visit a medical facility/hospital, you will be entitled to a partial refund based on the % progress you achieved up to the point of your departure. For example, if you became ill half-way through the course, you may be entitled to receive a 50% refund.

If you withdraw from a course of your own volition (after course commencement), you will forfeit any entitlement to a refund. You are deemed to have commenced a course once you arrive and participate in the opening remarks and course overview given on day 1.

Withdrawal from a course due to family or personal crisis does not automatically entitle a refund. In such instances, you will be able to re-join another course at a later date.

Students who are discovered to be under the influence of drugs, alcohol or any illicit substance will be removed from the course and no refund will be given. Criminal conduct voids any right to a refund – partial or otherwise.

All payments and refunds are handled in consideration the standards for RTO's and the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Commonwealth of Australia).

Dispute / Complaints Resolution:

Your assessor will not judge students based on their appearance, ethnic background, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. Everyone is treated with the same level of fairness and respect. The assessor listens/observes carefully and measures student performance against explicit pre-determined (measurable) criteria - so that as much personal bias is removed as reasonably possible. It is highly unlikely that your assessor will make a mistake and record you as 'NYC' when in fact you were competent.

Be that as it may, some students have strong perceptions of what they did or didn't do - or action they performed versus *inaction*. The assessor's decision is final - in a similar way to a football match where the umpire's decision is final (arguing with the umpire in a game will not win you any favours and could get you sent off the field).

However, VET (Vocational Education and Training) legislation requires all RTOs to have a dispute resolution system in place.

So if you really feel strongly that the assessor's decision was made in error - you do have the right to activate the dispute resolution process.

The complaints/dispute process is as follows:

1. Inform your assessor that you strongly disagree and that you intend to dispute it.
2. Contact PACI in writing, and inform that you intend to dispute your assessment result.
Note: PACI will not act on a verbal complaint over the telephone (it must be delivered in writing).
3. PACI will acknowledge receipt of your dispute claim.
4. PACI will obtain a letter from you outlining the 'statement of facts'.
5. Once we have your 'statement of facts' PACI will contact your assessor to seek a written response.
6. If any of the 'facts' are in dispute, PACI will contact other students who participated in your assessment for witness statements (they would either corroborate your dispute claim, or not).
7. Based on your 'statement of facts' and the written reply from the assessor, PACI will reach a decision and notify you. The decision will be made in consideration of what the assessment requirements are for the relevant units of competency, and whether the assessor complied with those requirements (or not) – and whether your assessment conditions were fair.
Note: The assessment requirements of relevant *units of competency* cannot be circumvented or ignored. For example, if you did not achieve an assessment requirement or you did not reach the required standard, it means you are in fact 'NYC' (not yet competent).
8. If the decision is in favour of the assessor and his/her original assessment decision stands, but you still strongly feel that decision is in error, you can take the matter further and complain directly to the State training ombudsman.
9. The State training ombudsman will make every effort to find a resolution to the dispute. However, if the decision made by the ombudsman is also disputed, then the next step is to escalate the matter to the RTO regulator (ASQA).
10. Within the 'VET' system, the final arbiter is ASQA (www.asqa.gov.au) and you will need to lodge a written complaint describing your dispute claim. However, ASQA is not an issuing authority and cannot issue any qualifications. Only an RTO is authorised to issue qualifications. ASQA will investigate the matter and reach a decision, and notify you of that decision.
11. There are no further avenues of dispute after ASQA - unless you decide to pursue the matter in the courts.
12. If you believe the decisions made by ASQA are unsatisfactory, you would need to engage a lawyer and have the matter heard in a court of law (at your own expense).

Student declaration and signature:

If you enrol on a PACI course, you are hereby deemed to have understood and unconditionally agreed to the terms and conditions of this student handbook and code of conduct.

To codify your consent to these conditions, you must sign the ‘student signing page’ – and forward it to your course instructor.

If you disagree to these terms and conditions, you should not enrol on a PACI course.