

STUDENT HANDBOOK AND CODE OF CONDUCT

For outdoor recreation 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 one of the oldest RTOs specialising in all forms of roped sports and activities involving risk of falls from height.

You will learn technical skills 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 recreational context (eg abseiling, rock climbing outdoors, climbing indoors on artificial surfaces, canyoning, caving, challenge ropes courses, etc).

All training consists of the following:

1. Theory (which includes completion of specific written exam papers)
2. Practical skills development (hands-on training)
3. Final assessment - your instructor needs to confirm that you can actually perform to the required standard.

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 conditional permission to use PACI intellectual property. However, before permission is granted, you will be required to complete a copyright application form. Upon receipt and approval of your application, you will be issued with passwords. These passwords are strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons or entities. The use of PACI intellectual property is for personal use only, and is in support of your learning. Commercial or business use is not permitted and such use incurs licencing fees. 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:

For all courses, students are expected to undertake a program of self-study including developing robust knot tying skills. Knots form the basis of all life critical roping systems – so it is important to learn and become confident in tying a baseline set of knots. Students must invest time in practicing their knot tying skills before course commencement. Students who arrive on their course without having practiced tying any knots will likely struggle to progress to tasks that holistically combine a range of skills – such as building anchors systems and performing rescue skills.

download and complete the PACI knot exam paper

download the PACI Protocols (this is a comprehensive learning resource)

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

download and complete all other exam papers relevant to your training

All 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!

The more effort you are willing to invest prior to commencement of training, the more you will gain from the overall course 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 and skills.

If you are training to become a 'Guide' or an 'Instructor'

Guides and/or Instructors have a higher level of responsibility than recreational climbers or abseilers.

A Guide/Instructor will have to comply with strict WHS (OHS) laws applicable to each State/Territory. In addition, all Guides/Instructors have a 'duty of care' that they owe to their clients/participants.

The health and safety of participants (or clients) under your control is crucially important and cannot be delegated.

With these legal responsibilities in mind, your training and assessment will be at a higher level and is designed to re-create the range of situations that could occur in the field. There will be some levels of stress and trainee Guides/instructors are expected to apply themselves and react appropriately to changing situations. It is expected that trainee Guides/Instructors will undertake self-learning outside of class contact hours – with the mindset of continuous improvement and a strong desire to learn.

The Guides web portal is here: <http://www.paci.com.au/guides.php>

The Instructors web portal is here: http://www.paci.com.au/instructor_assessment.php

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! Students will need to obtain passwords to open and use PACI intellectual property. Content is password protected to stop theft and unauthorised commercial use (PACI is entitled to protect its intellectual property). All content is finger-printed with its own unique password which is changed routinely (we can thus trace downloaded content).

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.

The learning process is a two-way street; this means students are expected to make an effort to manage their own learning. For example, a skill that is fundamental to all activities that involve exposure to falls from height, is knot tying. Knots form the backbone of all anchor systems which in turn supports the deployed ropes and fall protection systems. There is an expectation that students will make a considerable effort in mastering a range of knots to the extent that they can be accurately and consistently tied (error free).

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

Student behaviour and code of conduct during the program:

All students are expected to listen to instructions and respect the advice given by their instructor. Failure to do will expose you to serious risk of injury and/or death. All students are expected to apply themselves with a goal oriented desire to learn.

PACI has a zero tolerance policy toward abusive and/or rude and/or disruptive behaviour. Students who intentionally 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/assessor (ie the 'umpire') - as that only causes conflict, disruption and disharmony.

All courses involve some form of assessment to determine if competency has been achieved – and 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.

The analogy of the umpire on a sporting field:

Arguing with an umpire decision is universally known to be inappropriate and can result in the player being cautioned (eg **yellow** card or **red** card and sent off the field). A similar principle applies during assessment – students should gracefully accept the decisions made by the assessor (ie the 'umpire') and also accept responsibility for their own actions and performance. Assessors generally have an order of magnitude higher level of knowledge, skill and experience compared to their students – and this should be respected.

Any form of violence or threatening behaviour either toward your instructor / assessor 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.

Respectful and courteous behaviour is expected at all times. Students who are disruptive or belligerent will be cautioned and reminded of the behavioural code. If inappropriate and/or disruptive behaviour continues – such students will be removed from the program (a partial refund may be given, and is dependent on how far into the program when the offender was removed).

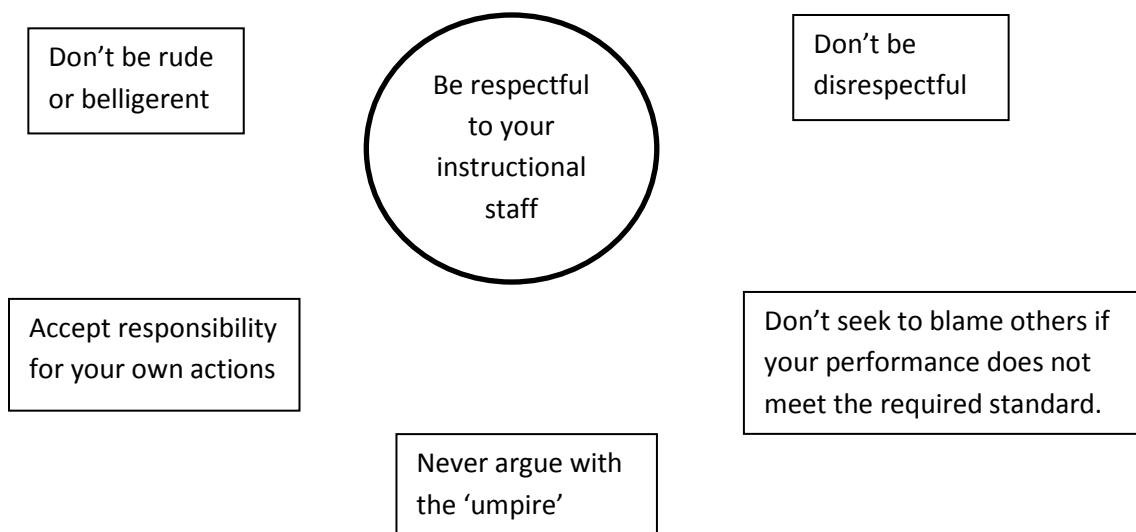
Psychological effects of height

All programs will involve exposure to height which carries varying levels of perceived risk. Some students may have a deep underlying fear of height – and this can have a profound effect on their performance and behaviour. Fear can induce stress and anxiety; when coupled with the stress of learning and being assessed, all the ingredients are present for a simmering outburst of emotion. Students who are likely to become agitated or emotional when exposed to height (and fall risks) – should try to recognise that their behaviour can have a disruptive influence on others. Instructional staff are trying to supply training that is accurate and realistic, and it is not appropriate to become disruptive or belligerent toward them because of the learning situation and the circumstances of the environment.

Assessment is a normal part of any learning process and is integral within Australia's Vocational Education Training (VET) framework. Assessment provides an opportunity to determine if the required level of knowledge and skill has been achieved.

Your instructor is required to assess your performance – the federal regulator (ASQA) requires that all students are assessed to determine if competency has been achieved (or not). If you are prone to emotional outbursts and/or becoming abusive toward those who have the responsibility of assessing, you should defer assessment and seek counselling and behavioural management.

In any case, all students need to be aware that payment for a course is not a guarantee that you will 'pass'.



Logistics:

Training may be delivered at a number of different sites and climates. Travel time to sites is a crucial factor – because long travel times reduce the number of usable training hours in a day. Some sites may be on private property, while others exist within a national park or local council administered land. At many sites, there may not be any toilets or potable water.

- Students may be required to meet their instructor at the training site
- Transport to/from a training site is not provided (need to arrange own transport)
- Obtain directions so you don't get lost or waste time

In general, we limit the maximum number of trainees to 8 (Exception: Maximum of 2 trainees on all outdoor *lead climbing* training)

Duration of training varies according to scope and complexity of skills – for example, lead climbing is considered to be more complex than abseiling or top rope climbing.

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

In general, daily course timings are:

Start: 07:00am

Finish: 5:15pm

#morning tea break is normally 15 minutes

#lunch break is normally 30-40 minutes duration

NOTE: These timings may vary according to how the class is progressing. Earlier starts may be necessary if anything has caused delays.

For example, inclement weather may cause delays or even cancellations. Obviously, indoor courses are not affected by weather.

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.

- Abseiling course on natural surfaces (single-pitch) = varies between 1 or 2 days
- Canyoning course = 2 days
- Top rope climbing on natural surfaces = 2 days
- Lead climbing (single-pitch) on trad routes = 3 days (prior completion of top rope climbing course or equivalent experience)
- Lead climbing (multi-pitch) on trad routes = 4 days (prior completion of top rope climbing course or equivalent experience)
- Vertical rescue course: varies according to context and scope of rescue skills

Personal logistical checklist for all courses:

- 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 to the environment and local climate (no thongs/flip flops or bare feet permitted)
- Be sun smart if training is outdoors – wear a hat and 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)

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 or activity context.

Assessment:

Your knowledge and skills will be assessed to determine if you have reached the required level of competency. The criterion for assessment is published in the SIS outdoor recreation training package.

Link: <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SIS> (VER Sep 11, 2019)

Results of your assessment are 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. Under the general terms of this code of conduct, arguing with your assessor is not appropriate. Students should gracefully accept the decision of their assessor – and this also means accepting responsibility for own performance and actions (refer to previous section on 'student behaviour and code of conduct').

PPE and Equipment: (please confirm PPE requirements at time of booking)

If you already have some of your own equipment, you are encouraged to bring it to your course (provided it is 'fit for purpose' and conforms to an ISO member nations standard). PPE that is made from textiles/synthetic material *generally* has a theoretical maximum life expiry period of 10 years.

PPE that is made from metal doesn't have an expiry date as such (it is based on wear rates and corrosion/cracking/deformity).

On some courses, your instructor may provide equipment for general group use.

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

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

- harness (lower body sit harness)
- helmet (not required for indoor climbing)
- belay device + locking carabiner
- gloves (not while climbing)

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.

All PPE and equipment that your instructor provides will meet local or international 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 trainees 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) 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, trainees 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 Guide or Instructor level training will need to be able to read and interpret technical documents such as Standards and Legislation. These students will need to be able engage with others in a meaningful dialogue and deliver technically accurate safety briefings and post activity debriefings. In general, Guides/Instructors are expected to have a higher level of LLN skills.

Plagiarism:

Some courses require students to hand in 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, lead climbing requires a higher degree of fitness and agility than abseiling.

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.

If you are susceptible to injury caused by vigorous exercise or suspension in a harness, you must visit your doctor and obtain a medical certificate that grants approval to undertake such 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.

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 pay 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 in National Parks – 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.

Roped activities at height carry significant potential for death or serious disabling injuries. Even though you may produce a 'certification' – some form of in-field verification may be 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.

Refunds:

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

Dispute 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 records student performance on the assessment template forms. Your performance is measured against explicit pre-determined 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 trainees have strong perceptions of what they did or didn't do - or action they performed versus *inaction*. Stress levels can be high due to fact that you are being assessed - and the fact that there is no refund if you receive an 'NYC' result. Although rare, it isn't outside the realms of possibility that a student may have an anxiety attack after being told they were 'NYC'. The assessors decision is final - in a similar way to a football match where the umpires 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, in the world of VET (Vocational Education and Training) all RTOs are required 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 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 describe the events as you believe they unfolded.
3. PACI will acknowledge receipt of your dispute claim.
4. PACI will contact your assessor to seek a written response.
5. PACI will contact the other candidates who participated in your assessment for witness statements (they would either corroborate your dispute claim, or not).

6. Based on the written replies from the assessor and the candidates who were present at the time of the alleged dispute, PACI will reach a decision and notify you.
7. If the decision is in favour of the assessor and his/her original assessment decision stands, but you still strongly feel that decision is also in error, you can take the matter further and complain directly to the regulatory body (ASQA).
8. The final arbiter is ASQA (www.asqa.gov.au) and you will need to lodge a written complaint describing your dispute claim.
9. ASQA will investigate the matter and reach a decision, and notify you of that decision.
10. There are no further avenues of dispute after ASQA - unless you decide to pursue the matter in the courts.

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Student declaration:

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

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