

Forest and Outdoor Learning Award (FOLA) Leadership Level 8 Information for Applicants 2026/27

The Forest and Outdoor Learning Award (FOLA) Leadership Award at SCQF Level 8 is recognised by the Forest School Association as equivalent to the Forest School Leader Practitioner Award (Level 3), qualifying you to lead Forest School programmes independently. As part of the nationally recognised FOLA pathway, the qualification is credit rated on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

This practical, person-centred qualification provides the knowledge, skills and confidence to design and lead inspiring Forest School and outdoor learning programmes that help people of all ages learn, develop and thrive through meaningful experiences in nature.

Training is delivered almost entirely outdoors through practical activities, reflection and shared learning. You will develop your own Forest School programme, complete assessment tasks throughout the course, and plan and deliver an 8-week introductory Forest School programme with a group of your choosing.

Successful graduates may also apply to become an Approved FOLA Delivery Centre, enabling their organisation to deliver accredited FOLA Skills Awards at SCQF Levels 2-5



Dates for 2026/2027

All sessions run from 9am – 5pm

Friday 4th September 2026

Friday 25th September 2026

Friday 2nd October 2026

Friday 9th October 2026

Friday 6th November 2026

Friday 20th November 2026

Friday 4th December 2026

Friday 11th December 2026

Friday 5th February 2027

Friday 4th June 2027

What are the minimum Entry Requirements?

Applicants should have literacy and reflective writing skills at approximately SCQF Level 6 (Higher level) or above, as the course includes written assignments and reflective practice. They should also have relevant experience of learning or working in an outdoor environment.

What is the Time Commitment?

FOLA 8 qualification

The qualification requires approximately 180 notional learning hours and is designed to be completed over 12 months.

This includes:

80 hours of taught learning, delivered over 10 days (eight taught days plus two consolidation days).

Approximately 100 hours of independent study, including coursework, reflective practice and preparation between sessions.

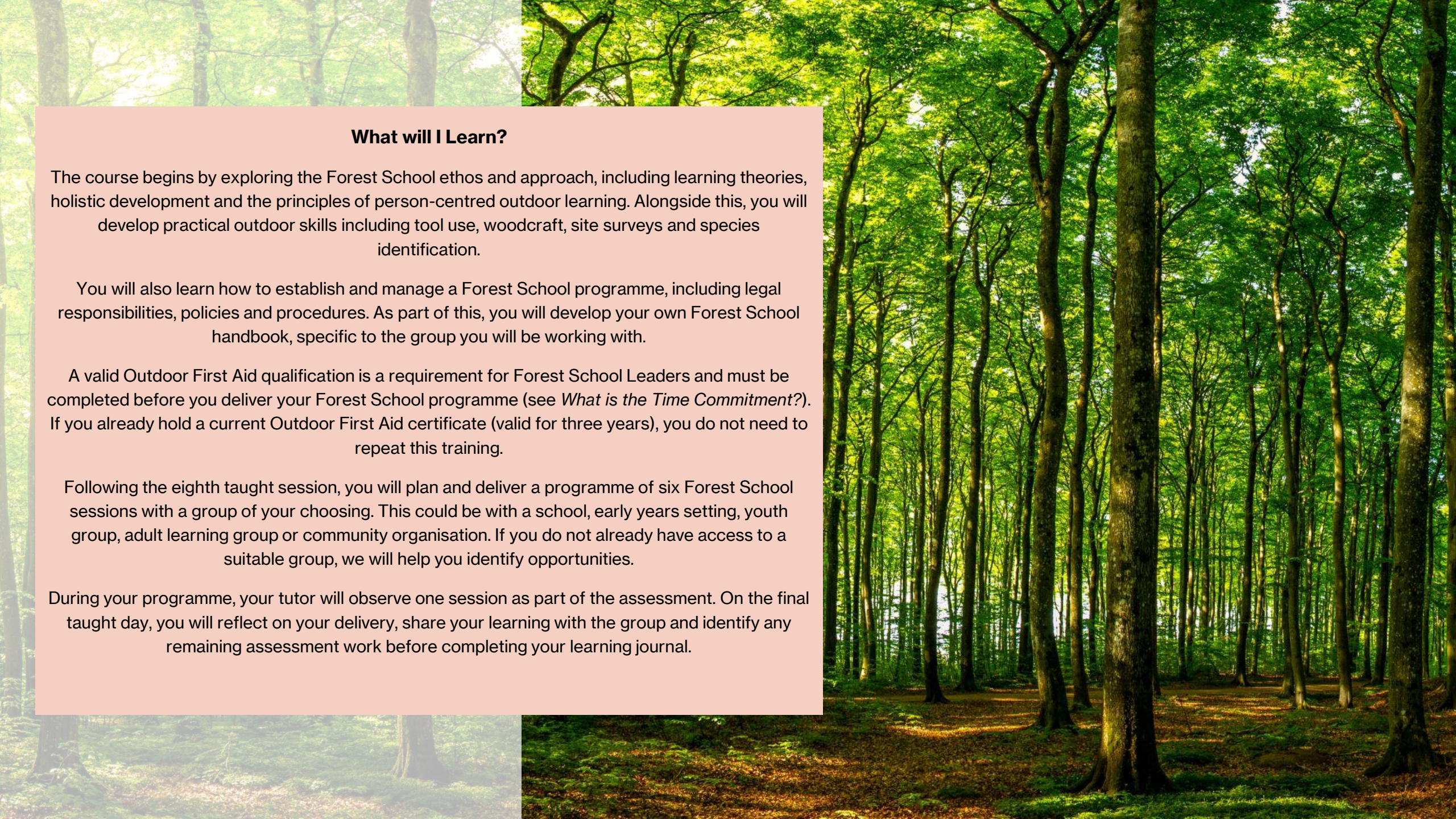
Attendance at all taught sessions is essential. The course is delivered almost entirely outdoors and uses an experiential approach, combining practical activities, professional discussions and written assessment. If a taught session is missed, it must be rescheduled and an additional fee will apply to cover staffing costs.

Outdoor First Aid

Forest School Leaders must hold a valid Outdoor First Aid certificate before delivering their Forest School programme. If you do not already hold a suitable qualification, you will need to complete a two-day Outdoor First Aid course separately.

Practical Forest School Delivery

As part of the qualification, you will plan and deliver a six-session Forest School programme with your own group. Your tutor will observe one session as part of the assessment.



What will I Learn?

The course begins by exploring the Forest School ethos and approach, including learning theories, holistic development and the principles of person-centred outdoor learning. Alongside this, you will develop practical outdoor skills including tool use, woodcraft, site surveys and species identification.

You will also learn how to establish and manage a Forest School programme, including legal responsibilities, policies and procedures. As part of this, you will develop your own Forest School handbook, specific to the group you will be working with.

A valid Outdoor First Aid qualification is a requirement for Forest School Leaders and must be completed before you deliver your Forest School programme (see *What is the Time Commitment?*). If you already hold a current Outdoor First Aid certificate (valid for three years), you do not need to repeat this training.

Following the eighth taught session, you will plan and deliver a programme of six Forest School sessions with a group of your choosing. This could be with a school, early years setting, youth group, adult learning group or community organisation. If you do not already have access to a suitable group, we will help you identify opportunities.

During your programme, your tutor will observe one session as part of the assessment. On the final taught day, you will reflect on your delivery, share your learning with the group and identify any remaining assessment work before completing your learning journal.



How Will I be Assessed?

Reflection is an important part of the qualification and you will complete a learning journal throughout the course. We encourage you to keep notes and photographs to help evidence your learning and support your reflections.

You will also complete assessments for each of the eight units of the qualification. These assess both your own knowledge and understanding, and your ability to facilitate learning for others in the following areas:

- Being in the forest and outdoors: Nature connection, Scottish outdoor access, responsible behaviour and safe practice
- Knowing the forest and outdoors: The woodlands and outdoor habitats – species identification and sustainable site use
- Working in the forest and outdoors: Tool use, fire making, cordage and knots, cooking
- Making in the forest and outdoors: Shelter building, woodcraft, visual art, imaginative responses
- Learning: Understanding of ethos, behaviour and theoretical approaches to learning and teaching in the outdoors
- Leading in the forest and outdoors: Leadership, decision making, community and team building
- Managing in the forest and outdoors: Implementation and management of a Forest School programme, observation and recommendations for three learners
- Legal Compliance: Demonstrate understanding and application of legal compliance, risk assessment, insurance and relevant policies

Assessment is undertaken in a variety of ways, including written assignments, practical activities, professional discussions, group discussions and an observed Forest School session during your programme delivery. Evidence may be presented in a range of formats where appropriate.

What Resources are Required?

The most important requirement is time. You will need sufficient time throughout the year to attend the taught sessions, complete independent study, and plan, deliver and evaluate your Forest School programme.

You will also need access to a computer and suitable outdoor clothing, including waterproofs and sturdy boots. A college laptop may be available to borrow if required.

During the taught sessions, you will have access to Newbattle Abbey College's Forest and Outdoor Learning resources. As your confidence grows, you will learn how to develop and use your own resources to support Forest School programmes in your own setting.



What are the Full Costs?

Course fee: £1,339 , payable one month before the course starts. Payment plans are available on request.

Outdoor First Aid: If required, the cost of a 16-hour Outdoor First Aid course with an external provider is additional.

Resources: As you develop your own Forest School programme, you may wish to build up a basic kit (for example, tarps, hammocks, a first aid kit and seating mats). A basic starter kit typically costs around **£200**.

Cancellation: A **£300 cancellation fee** applies if you withdraw after accepting your place but before attending the first taught session. If you withdraw after attending the first taught session, the full course fee remains payable.

Funding: External funding may be available at certain points during the year. Please visit Skills Hub Scotland for details of current funding opportunities.

How Do I Apply?

If you have any questions, please contact FOLA@nac.ac.uk

To apply, please complete the application form here -

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/VKy8Ks2g5Q>