

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

The FOLA level 8 is recognised by the Forest School Association as equivalent to the Forest School Leader Practitioner award level 3 which qualifies you as a Forest School Leader and to run forest school programmes. The FOLA awards are aligned with the Scottish qualification framework providing a pathway programme from level 2 – 8 and are credit rated by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

The FOLA award at level 8 is slightly wider than purely forest school and gives practitioners the skills to deliver a range of outdoor learning in different outdoor environments using a forest school approach. As such the training is quite intense and there is a structured time commitment.

In addition, qualified practitioners can apply to register their centre as an Approved FOLA Delivery centre to deliver accredited FOLA skills awards levels 2- 5.



Dates for 2026/2027

Block 1 - Sat 25 and Sun 26 April 2026

Block 2 - Sat 23 and Sun 24 May

Block 3 - Sat 20 and Sun 21 June

Block 4 - Sat 29 and Sun 30 Aug

Block 5 - Sun 1 Nov

Block 6 - Sun 25 April 2027

What are the minimum Entry Requirements?

SCQF level 7 or above (HNC level or above) or FOLA level 6 plus significant experience in the outdoor learning environment.

What is the Time Commitment?

The taught elements of the course comprise 80 in person hours. This is delivered over 4 blocks with 2 additional days for consolidation of learning, planning delivery of forest school sessions, reviewing delivery and training in how to deliver the FOLA skills awards.

Students must be available for all the taught elements of the course. The course is delivered almost entirely outdoors. It is experiential learning with assessed professional discussions during the course, as well as via worksheets. Due to the experiential nature of the learning, any sessions that are missed need to be rescheduled and a fee will need to be charged to cover staffing.

In between sessions and beyond there is a good deal of work to prepare with a notional **100 additional hours** of learning of own time (equivalent of 2 hours per week over a year approx.). We have designed the course to be completed within 12 months. This includes the preparation and delivery of a 6 session block of forest school after block 5.

Sessions begin at 9.00am and finish at 5.00pm and take place at the Outdoor Learning Classroom at Newbattle Abbey College and within the college grounds.

What will I Learn?

The first four blocks focus on forest school ethos and practice, learning theories and holistic development as well as practical outdoor skills, using tools, woodcraft, site surveys and species identification. We will also spend time covering the policies and procedures required to run a forest school and you will need to prepare a handbook of policies.

A two day Outdoor First Aid course is a requirement for forest school leaders and will need to be completed before delivery of your forest school programme (further details below). A recommended provider of this course can be found on here - <https://firstaidtrainingcooperative.co.uk/outdoor/#publicm>. If you have a current outdoor first aid certificate (valid for 3 years) you do not need to do this part of the course.

The 5th block is a final check on preparation for your delivery of a programme of 6 Forest School sessions which needs to be delivered between the end of October 2026 and May 2027. You should be thinking *in advance* of the course where and when you can deliver your sessions – it could be a school group, early years group, youth group or adult community group. We will help to signpost you if you do not have any group options in mind. During your 6 session delivery, your tutor will visit to do one observed/assessed session midway through the delivery. Note that if you are more than 20 miles from Newbattle Abbey College there will be travel expense to cover @ 45p per mile.

During the final day in April, we will reflect on learning from the forest school sessions and the remaining work to cover. By this date you should have either finished or be close to completing delivery of your 6 sessions. Thereafter, you will complete evaluation of sessions and your learning journal.





How Will I be Assessed?

A considerable part of the course is reflecting on learning and you will need to submit a learning journal. It is essential to take notes and photographs wherever possible throughout your learning experience.

In addition there will be assessments on each of the 8 units of the course. The units cover your own understanding of the following as well as how you facilitate learning for others in:

- 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: in the 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 3 learners
- Legal Compliance: demonstrate understanding and application of legal compliance, risk assessment, insurance, relevant policies

Much of the assessment will be written, though you can present in different formats. There is also a mix of group discussion assessments and practical skills assessments, as well as an observed session during your forest school delivery.

What Resources are Required?

Time is the biggest factor and will be important that students have adequate time across the year to attend the in-person sessions and to plan and deliver sessions and coursework. Access to a laptop and good outdoor clothing (waterproofs and sturdy boots) is also important. It may be possible to borrow a college laptop.

During the course, you will have access to our forest college resources. All resources for your own session delivery need to be provided by yourself or your organisation.



What are the Full Costs?

Course fee is £1296.00, with payment one month prior to course start. Payment plans are available, please ask for more detail.

Outdoor first aid course with an external provider

Travel expenses @ 45ppm (pence per mile) for your observed session if more than 20 miles from Newbattle Abbey College

You will need to provide resources for your own forest school delivery/site such as tarps, hammocks, first aid kit, mats etc with a basic kit of around £200.00

Cancellation fee of £250.00 if you withdraw from the course after accepting your place (but do not attend any in person taught elements)

Full course fee to be paid if you withdraw from the course any time after attending the first in person taught elements

How Do I Apply?

To apply or to discuss any aspect please contact studentadmin@nac.ac.uk