

# NOLS NZ INSTRUCTOR COURSE INFORMATION

The National Outdoor Leadership School's Instructor Course is designed to train experienced outdoors people to be instructors at NOLS and at other wilderness-based outdoor education programs. This information sheet covers a range of topics relating to the instructor course: brief descriptions of our instructor courses, qualifications for applicants, the application and review process and timetable, and employment at NOLS. This information is meant to give a clear picture of the process and expectations involved in applying for and taking an instructor course. In addition we recommend that you review a current course catalog (or check out our web site) to gain an understanding of our overall mission and programs. If you have any questions after reading this information, please contact our admission office.

## A Profile of NOLS

NOLS is a private non-profit school focusing on experiential education in a wilderness setting. Our international headquarters is in Lander, Wyoming, with nine branch schools located in Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Yukon Territory, Washington, Wyoming, Mexico (Baja), Australia/New Zealand and Chile (Patagonia.) We also have programs in India, Brazil, Argentina and Baffin Island Canada. NOLS offers 70+ course types in wilderness areas worldwide for students from ages 14 to over 50. On our courses, instructors take groups of novices into remote wilderness settings for extended periods of time. In addition to student courses, we run trips for alumni, conferences and seminars on wilderness related educational topics, sponsor an extensive staff training program, conduct research and produce publications on environmental conservation, wilderness skills, risk management and leadership.

Yearly we enroll 3,000+ students and employ approximately 500 instructors and 150+ full-time and part-time administrative and support service staff. We have more than 75,000 graduates and have certified over 1,600 instructors since our founding in 1965. We are actively seeking to diversify our students, instructors, and administration, and we have a scholarship program for women and minorities to directly support this goal.

## What is the Instructor Course?

The NOLS Instructor Course (IC) is specifically designed for people interested in working as field instructors for NOLS. Other outdoor programs value employment applications from IC graduates. (Please note: the IC is not designed for novices; it is designed to teach people with extensive experience how to teach to novices in a wilderness expedition setting.) ICs are intensive training experiences in outdoor education, and all of them include an in-depth review of our "core curriculum" in five fundamental areas: risk management, leadership and teamwork, outdoor skills, environmental ethics, and wilderness education skills. The various ICs differ in the technical skills addressed, location, and environment. What follows is a brief summary of each IC. More detailed course descriptions for each are available from our admission department.

### Mountain Instructor Course

Run in Wyoming, Arizona, and Alaska this five-week IC emphasizes multi-week wilderness mountain backpacking and technical climbing skills. The packs are heavy, and the days are long. This is the IC to take in order to begin working our wilderness (backpacking) and mountaineering courses. The Alaska IC also includes glacier mountaineering training.

### River Instructor Course

Based out of Vernal, Utah, this IC is scheduled for April and May and goes on several multi-day river trips in canoes, kayaks, and paddle and oar rafts. The RIC floats sections of the Green, White and Yampa Rivers in Colorado and Utah; the watercraft skills focus is roughly 20% canoe, 40% raft, and 40% kayak. The RIC includes canoe, kayak, and raft curriculums, river rescue training, and the NOLS core curriculum.

### New Zealand Instructors Course (NIC) and Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course

*This course will be either a hiking/mountain, sea kayaking or river instructors course based out of Christchurch, New Zealand and is oriented specifically for New Zealand or Australian citizens or permanent residents of these countries who hold locally recognized instructor qualifications. It is not open to applicants who cannot work legally in NZ or Australia without a visa. The purpose of this course is to build the staffing pool for both the NOLS NZ and NOLS Australia programme. Staff that take this instructor course are not restricted to working for NOLS in Australia or New Zealand and can work elsewhere for NOLS. A ten day Wilderness First Responder course (WFR) is offered before this course. All instructors attending the NIC must hold a current WFR.*

### Yukon Canoe Instructor Course

This course will be based out of Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada and will either paddle the Bonnet Plume or the Hess rivers. It runs in June and balances the NOLS core curriculum with wilderness canoe travel. Refining white water canoe and teaching skills will be a focus on the course.

### Sea Kayak Instructor Course

Starting in mid-April and based out of Conway, Washington this course will sea kayak amongst the waterways surrounding Campbell and Calvert Islands before crossing Fitz Hugh Sound. This course will train and evaluate teaching, risk management and sea kayak skills.

### Sailing Instructor Course

NOLS Mexico near Mulege on the Gulf of California, Baja California Sur, hosts this IC in late November. The program uses 20 foot Drascombe longboats.

### Instructor Course for Experienced Professionals or PIC

Each September, we run this course in Wyoming. We use this course to train staff with extensive wilderness-based experience from other outdoor programs to work for NOLS. It emphasizes wilderness backpacking and climbing/mountaineering skills. The minimum requirements are that you are 25 years of age, have a WFR or EMT certification, and have *worked at least 60 weeks in the wilderness as a professional educator*. There is a separate application packet for the PIC, so please be sure to request it if you meet these qualifications. Contact the NOLS admission office for more information.

## **When is the New Zealand Instructors Course?**

The New Zealand Instructor Course (NIC) this year is a River IC, focused on learning canadian canoe skills on the Clarence River. The IC will be open to paddlers with the appropriate white water skills whether or not they have paddled a canadian canoe or not. It is 23 days in length and starts on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010 and will finish on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010. NOLS NZ will also run a ten day Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course which precedes the NIC and begins on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2010 and finishes on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010 (includes one day off).

## **How much will the NIC and WFR cost ?**

The tuition cost (NZ GST included) of the NIC is \$2600NZD (approx. \$2200AUD). NOLS is subsidizing the tuition for New Zealand and Australian applicants through scholarships so that the **actual** cost to each participant will be **\$800NZD**. Applicants may also apply for scholarship support but given that the course cost is already subsidized, additional support from NOLS International will be limited.

**WFR:** The ten day **WFR** will cost successful IC applicants **\$550NZD**. This is only for applicants who need to obtain the WFR to work for NOLS.

## **Qualifications for Applicants**

NOLS was founded to develop expedition leaders and responsible wilderness users. Our faculty lies at the very heart of this mission. We attract enthusiastic men and women who are not only technically skilled, but whose focus is on teaching wilderness skills and leadership to our students. Admission to the instructor course is a selective process. We look at an applicant's overall experience, skills and past performance in making our selections.

**Age:** Minimum is 21 at the start of your course. (IC participants average 27 years old, and NOLS field staff average 32.)

### **Medical/First Aid Training Requirements and Information**

- **You must possess current CPR and Wilderness training to our minimum standard to work as a NOLS Instructor**
- **Our minimum instructor standard:** a current **wilderness** medicine or remote first aid certification that has at least 72 hours of instruction in addition to at least a basic adult CPR certificate with 4 hours of instruction.
- **If you are not certified** in first aid at our minimum standard please send us what certifications you do have. As most outdoor educators in NZ or Australia do not hold WFR or equivalent, we will accept applicants who hold at least 16 hours of advanced or outdoor first aid within the last two years in addition to current CPR. *In this case you must take the Wilderness First Responder course that runs immediately before the instructors course or take an equivalent course before the NIC.*
- The New Zealand **Pre-hospital Emergency Care (PHEC)** or **Outdoor First Aid (NZQA Unit 424)** qualification, and the Australian **Leaders Wilderness Advanced First Aid (LWFA)** do not meet the NOLS requirements as they do not give you sufficient training to implement the NOLS field and drug protocols. This is also the case with many urban ambulance certifications or urban Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) qualifications.
- Contact the NOLS New Zealand office if you have questions. (+64) 3 348 6657 or email [new\\_zealand@nols.edu](mailto:new_zealand@nols.edu)

### **Teaching, Leadership, and Communication:**

Instructor candidates must possess and model maturity and effective group interaction skills with peers and students alike. You must be both conversant in and able to write effectively in English. You must have a strong desire to teach and lead novices, who make up the majority of students in outdoor education. We are looking for demonstrated teaching and leadership experience - most applicants have previous experience (one or more seasons) in positions where they have professionally coordinated, taught, and/or led outdoor trips. The more this experience involves being on extended wilderness trips, the more relevant and valuable that it is.

### **Risk Management and Judgment:**

Our instructors take groups of novices into remote wilderness settings for extended periods of time. You must have experience in the recognition and evaluation of potential hazards and in making sound judgments based on risk management priorities. You also must have experience in managing individuals and groups and in understanding their abilities and limitations as well as your own. You need to be in excellent physical condition and have enough skill and energy to help others during travel through difficult terrain, in challenging weather, over long tiring days.

### **Personal Expeditioning:**

Personal trips and expeditions give you the experience to plan, organize and successfully carry out trips without institutional support and guidance. They also reflect a personal commitment to exploring and enjoying the wilderness on your own. Experience on trips of two weeks or longer is desirable because it begins to approach the duration and feel of long expeditionary NOLS courses.

**Travel and Camping:** You must have solid backcountry navigation, travel, and camping skills. These should be based on extensive wilderness experience in varied environments. Conservation and Leave No Trace (Minimum Impact Camping) habits must be impeccable.

### **Technical Skills Required/ Desired for NIC:**

- Extensive river travel/wilderness and camping experience is **required**. Some of this experience should be in very remote places, with some experience on remote multi day expeditions.
- Relevant NZ or Australian outdoor industry qualifications in Canoe, Kayak or Raft are **required**. Specific examples include NZOIA Kayak 1, NZOIA Canoe 1, Australian Cert IV in Outdoor Recreation. Higher qualifications, equivalent\* international qualifications or in some cases experience\* is also acceptable (\*as determined by NOLS).
- River rescue training and experience is required.

### **Other Skills/Experience:**

Besides all the above mentioned skill areas, we are also interested in other skills you may have which are not part of this instructor course such as backpacking skills, seakayaking, sailing, caving, backcountry skiing, winter camping, rock and alpine climbing and wilderness horsepacking. Most NOLS instructors are able to work in more than one technical area.

### **New Zealand or Australian Residency or Citizenship:**

This course is only for those who are able to legally live and work in New Zealand or Australia without a visa

## **The Application Process:**

#### **1) Self-screening:**

Review the above qualification information and decide whether your skill and experience meets the guidelines stated. Decide whether your experience sets you up to excel on a NOLS IC. If not, before applying to the IC, consider either taking a different NOLS course or taking other opportunities to gain more experience and training.

**2) Fill out the application and send it in** The scholarship applications are included in the application packet. If you have questions email Allen Obannon at [new\\_zealand@nols.edu](mailto:new_zealand@nols.edu) or phone (+64) (3) 348 6657. Please submit NIC applications to NOLS NZ by **May 30<sup>th</sup> 2010**.

#### **Mail applications to:**

**NIC Applications  
NOLS NZ  
276 Blakes Rd  
Templeton  
Christchurch RD 6  
New Zealand 7676**

**Fax (+64) (3)-348-6659**

**3) NOLS reviews your completed application and letters from your referees:** NOLS NZ and NOLS Australia staff will review the applications, make comments and forward these to the IC review committee in Lander USA. The final decision will be made by the IC review committee. You will be notified as to whether your application has been successful by **June 31st, 2010**.

#### **4) Course Payment:**

Payment for the NIC is due at the NOLS NZ office by August 30, 2010 by cheque or international money order (for Australian applicants or those applicants based outside New Zealand). NOLS NZ does not currently have EFTPOS or credit card facilities.

## Common Questions:

- **I do not have the right WFR first aid certification to apply?**  
For the NIC, that is OK provided you have current CPR and at least 16 hours of outdoor or advanced first aid training (e.g. PHEC). NOLS NZ will run a ten day Wilderness First Responder (WFR) course one week or so before the NIC for those that need this certification to work for NOLS. See above for the cost of the WFR.
- **What if I'm just starting out in outdoor education?**  
The information provided in this letter is designed to aid you in evaluating your own qualifications for the Instructor Course. If you are interested in becoming a NOLS instructor as your *first* step in pursuing work in outdoor education, chances are your skills and experience are inadequate for selection. You might first consider working for another outdoor programme first, getting a outdoor qualification at a Polytech or a TAFE or getting a NZ or Australian outdoor industry award (e.g. NZOIA or ORCA). If you are interested in a NOLS course in order to pursue an outdoor education career elsewhere, other NOLS courses would be more appropriate as the IC is tailored specifically for those wanting to work for NOLS.
- **What determines whether I pass the Instructor Course and am recommended for hire at NOLS?**  
Your performance and evaluation are the primary criteria. Your instructors, senior NOLS field staff, evaluate your performance throughout the course. Feedback is ongoing and focuses on your ability to perform technical skills to acceptable standards, your ability to function as a group member and effectively lead your peers, your teaching skills, and your overall competence as an outdoor educator. You receive an extensive written evaluation covering all areas at the conclusion of the IC.
- **What are my opportunities for work after completing the New Zealand Instructor Course?**  
60 - 70% of all instructor course graduates eventually work for NOLS. This proportion is higher for the NZIC (currently 90%) because of the high demand for NZ and Australian instructors at NOLS NZ and NOLS Australia. The NOLS New Zealand season runs between September and May whereas the NOLS Australia season runs between March and August. You should plan to be available to work for NOLS either immediately after the NIC or during the months of January to August.
- **Can I work for NOLS outside of NZ or Australia?**  
Yes, this is one of the main benefits of working for NOLS versus other programmes in NZ or Australia. NOLS has the ability to obtain visas for field staff in the USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, India and Chile as well as NZ or Australia.
- **If I work for NOLS outside of NZ or NOLS Australia, will NOLS pay for my airfare to get overseas? Will NOLS pay for my visa?**  
It depends. The proportion of your airfare NOLS will pay for will increase depending on whether: 1. You are committing to two or more contracts overseas, 2. You have a hard-to-find skill set (such as sailing), are very experienced or are particularly skilled 3. We are not short of instructors in NZ or Australia at the same time. 4. You are qualified to be a NOLS course leader, 5. There is a shortage of instructors for the contracts you are going to work.  
Overseas travel support and visa processing reimbursements are usually negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Generally visa costs are paid for staff working outside their home country.
- **Is it possible to work for NOLS only in the summer or for just one or two contracts a year?**  
Yes. Many NOLS instructors are professionals in other jobs and are only able to work one or two courses a year in their specialty area. A typical contract lasts between 14 and 40 days. Some instructors just work one or two contracts a year. Some instructors are students in the off-season. Instructors with summer-only schedules are an important part of our faculty. There is no doubt that to get the most out of working for NOLS and/or to advance within the organization you are best to work as much as you can for the first 2-3 years.
- **What are the wages and benefits for instructors?**  
Wages are based on seniority and position. Most IC graduates will work their first course in a training position earning NZ\$154/day in NZ or Au \$145 per day in Australia. Most commonly this probationary rate only applies to the first contract a new staff member works. After this first contract, wages increase to NZ\$159-170/day (NZ) or Au\$151-160/day (Aus) depending on whether you are course-leading or not. Field staff wages are typically raised across the board each year, and an individual instructor's wages increase at regular seniority intervals. Our most senior faculty earn about NZ\$230/Au\$220/day when they work as lead instructor on a course. In addition, free gear rental, travel allowances, subsidized training opportunities, subsidized accommodation/ food as well as equipment pro-purchase benefits are all available.
- **Does my pay increase if I work outside New Zealand?**  
Local pay rates and labour laws apply only when you are working in your home country for example in NZ, NZ staff are eligible for an extra 8% holiday pay along with 2% Kiwisaver, whereas in Australia, Aussie staff are eligible for superannuation. All staff at NOLS working outside of their home country are paid on the US instructor pay rate (which is generally similar to the NZ or Aussie payrates though may vary depending on the value of the US dollar). The only exception to this is if Australians work in New Zealand, they will be paid the Australian wage and pay Australian taxes and if New Zealanders work in Australia, they will be paid the New Zealand wage and pay New Zealand taxes. Whether or not your pay increases if you work for NOLS overseas will depend on relevant local labour laws and the exchange rate of the US dollar. It can get a little confusing so feel free to ask for clarity.

- **Do I gain any recognition for experience as an outdoor instructor before I started work with NOLS?**

NOLS has a review system called "Recognition of Prior Experience" or "ROPE" for those who pass an instructors course and start working as an instructor. The review works as follows. An applicant submits logs showing the amount of experience that they have instructing in various contexts. The ROPE committee reviews that experience and awards the applicants "ROPE weeks". Every NOLS instructor's pay is determined by the number of weeks they have worked in the field. ROPE weeks increase that number and therefore increase how much instructors get paid. The key thing to remember about ROPE weeks is that these are only awarded for time spent in teaching contexts that are similar or comparable to those at NOLS.

- **What are the career opportunities at NOLS?**

The employment possibilities offered by NOLS allow tremendous flexibility. A number of our instructors have maintained professional non-NOLS careers while working for NOLS as their schedule allows. Others have been at the school for years and work year-round in the field. Still others have taken opportunities for advancement to full-time salaried positions that combine administrative and field work, while others have developed an administrative career. Seventy five percent of NOLS managers and branch directors are instructors, and over half of the full-time, in-town staff are instructors. As you develop seniority as a field instructor, more options become available.

- **Any other questions?**

Please email: [new\\_zealand@nols.edu](mailto:new_zealand@nols.edu) or phone (+64) (3) 348 6657