DRY STONE WALLING ASSOCIATION

CRAFT CERTIFICATION SCHEME

The requirements and fees set out in this publication are applicable from January 2025
Lantra Awards Accredited Qualifications

Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain
Lantra Awards Accredited Craft Certification Scheme

Introduction
The Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain (DSWA) offers a series of qualifications in the craft of dry stone walling. Practical tests are available at Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. These qualifications are accredited by our partners at Lantra Awards and approved by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). Alongside these accredited qualifications, the DSWA also offers its own Master Craftsman certificate - the highest certification available in the craft of dry stone walling. All these qualifications are designed to ensure that dry stone wallers and dykers work to the highest standards of craftsmanship.

Who can be Tested?
Tests are available to all individuals, irrespective of whether they are members of the DSWA or not. It is recommended that candidates new to the craft, or with limited experience, commence with the Level 1 qualification. Those already working in the craft or with more experience may start at Level 2.

Where to get Help and Guidance
Dates for training courses held at the DSWA National Training Site in Cumbria are published at www.dswa.org.uk. Basic introductory training and informal practice events are run throughout the country by the DSWA's network of local Branches. These are publicised on the DSWA website under the *Membership* heading. The Association can also advise on test days taking place at other venues throughout the country. Anyone unsure of how to proceed can contact our Training & Education Coordinator at training@dswa.org.uk for further guidance.

How to Apply
Application forms can be completed online at www.dswa.org.uk, from the *Assessment Booking* section under the *Training & Education* heading. Applications should be submitted with the relevant fee **at least four weeks prior to the test date**. Payment can be made on-line via the DSWA website, using either PayPal or credit/debit cards.

How Tests are Arranged and Conducted
Tests will only take place on prearranged test days. Please contact our Training & Education Coordinator to discuss options for tests in more remote areas of the UK - although be aware additional costs may apply.

Tests cannot take place until the Application Form and fees have been received by the DSWA.

At all levels, the work must be the unaided work of the candidate. Candidates should not take a test on a section of wall on which they have previously practised. It is recommended lots be drawn for test sections and Assessors will ensure critical stones, such as those for cheekends, are randomised where a site has obviously been used for practices or previous tests. The use of sawn or machined stone is not permitted in any DSWA test. The occasional sawn face is permissible as long as an attempt has been made to dress the stone to reveal a more natural looking face. It is worth remembering that any visible sawn faces will be looked upon as an indication of inferior work and will be penalised by the Assessors.

Over use of tools is discouraged and the use of angle grinders and/or stone saws is not permitted on any work being assessed under the DSWA Craft Certification Scheme.

Candidates should ensure their attire and conduct throughout the test are in the best interests of their own safety and the safety of others on the site. Protective footwear (to safety standard ISO EN 20345) **must** be worn throughout the test.

To pass any of the DSWA tests the candidate must not only achieve the overall pass mark, but must also attain at least the minimum mark available in all sections of the test. For instance if the total available mark for Foundations is 24 then the candidate must achieve a mark of 12 or above to pass the section, the same is applicable throughout all sections of the test.

ALL timed tests are 7.5 hours in length.

Where a candidate fails to achieve the marks required to pass a test, Assessors must clearly indicate areas of weakness to the candidate.

DSWA/Lantra Awards will appoint Assessors for all relevant tests and may send representatives, without notice, to observe tests taking place.

Assessors should not assess their own trainees or employees.

Appeals
Appeals must be made in writing within ten working days of the test. The Appeals Procedure is available at www.dswa.org.uk

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Working Wallers & Dykers
The list of contractors, available on the DSWA website, www.dswa.org.uk, indicates the level of certification held by those paying the current professional subscription to the DSWA.

Overseas Candidates
Separate arrangements can be made for candidates wishing to take the DSWA certificates overseas (any level). For the DSWA Overseas assessment process please contact training@dswa.org.uk.

GDPR
Under the General Data Protection Regulations, the DSWA maintains a computerised record of all qualifications and certificates issued, which is used to provide information about the skills level and qualifications of an individual, if required.

If a DSWA certificate is lost or damaged, replacements can be obtained at a cost of £30 per certificate. For replacement Lantra certificates a separate cost will apply.

What the Assessors Look For

General Approach and Safety at all Levels: To demonstrate a methodical approach and display an understanding of the principles of dry stone walling relative to the level of test being taken. The candidate must work with the safety of themselves and others in mind at all times and show an understanding of safe working practices and risk assessments relevant to the test day. The candidate should keep the working area clear of obstacles and leave the site tidy at the end of the test. Safety glasses should be worn when dressing stone. PPE safety boots to standard ISO EN 20345 are compulsory, failure to wear these will result in the candidate being excluded from the test. Any unsafe practices displayed by a candidate can result in failure of a test.

Note: Unsafe practices displayed in a test situation, especially with regard to others on the site, will result in failure of a test and, if necessary the Assessor will halt the test.

Level 1 (and all subsequent levels)

- **Stripping Out**: Cope stones laid in line approximately 2m from the wall with cover bands and through stones laid next to them. Building stones and packing should be placed on both sides of the wall. Foundation stones should be laid on top of the building stones leaving a clear space free from obstruction adjacent to the wall in which to work.

- **Preparing and Laying Foundations**: The foundation trench should be dug out and levelled. The largest stones should be selected for the foundation and be laid end in end out. The foundation should be well packed.

- **Building and Packing**: The stones should be laid tightly together with good contact between them with no loose stones. All building stones should be laid end in end out with no vertical running joints greater than two stones. If appropriate the stones should be coursed. The largest stones should be placed at the base of the wall gradually diminishing in size as the wall height increases. The hearting should be thoroughly packed into the wall and not just thrown in. A definite line should be visible at the top of the wall on which the cope stones will sit.

- **Placing of Throughbands**: The through stones should be set at the same height creating a visible horizontal line running along the wall spaced no more than 1m apart. These should protrude from the face of the wall on each side (but note regional variations).

- **Line and Straightness**: The candidate should demonstrate the ability to wall to string lines. The face of the wall should be straight when viewed down its length, there should be no bulges, hollows or protruding stones.

- **Batter or Camber:** The candidate should demonstrate the correct use of frames or pins to set the wall profile. The wall should batter in evenly on both sides and this batter should be consistent along the full length of the wall.

- **Copestones and Finish**: Copestones should sit solidly on their own base rather than being propped up on pins. They should be vertical, fitting tightly together to give a level finish to the top of the wall (but note regional variations). There should be minimal pinning but when used this should be neat, tight and blend into the wall.

- **Theory based questions:** Candidates should have knowledge of health & safety and knowledge related to their practical test piece.

Additional for Level 2

- **Cheekend/Wall head**: All cheekend stones should be tied well back into the body of the wall. There should be no vertical running joints either up the face of the cheekend or where it ties back into the body of the wall. The end copestone should be solid.

- **Theory based questions:** Candidates should have knowledge of health & safety and knowledge related to their practical test piece.

Additional for Level 3
Guidance sheets for Level 3 features, including calculation of slope can be found on the DSWA website, www.dswa.org.uk.

- **Curve:** The wall should be a definite, smooth curve with an even batter both inside and out (refer to guidance sheets). The building stones and copestones must be tight.

- **Lunky or Waterpen**: The opening should be at least 500mm x 500mm. The corners should be well tied back into the wall and display a good selection of suitable stones. The lintel must be long enough to extend into the wall sufficiently on either side.

- **High Wall**: The width of the wall at the base must be in proportion to the overall height of the wall and the wall should contain multiple rows of through stones, again in proportion to its height. Safe working practices should be observed when working at height.

- **Sloping Ground**: A slope of approximately 20 degrees for Level 3 and 30 degrees for the Master Craftsman test are required. The foundations should be stepped into the bank at appropriate intervals. The through stones should be at the correct spacing and height and the building stones should be coursed horizontally if possible. All the copestones should be tight and self supporting.

- **Retaining Wall**: The wall should be stripped out carefully to avoid earth falls. The width of the base and the batter should be appropriate for the height of the wall and the material being retained. All building stone must be laid end in end out and be carefully packed to the earth face. The through stones should be as long as possible and ideally should be dug into the earth bank. Additional rows of through stones may be required according to the height of the wall. The ground retained behind the wall must be 1.2m high measured from the base of the foundation trench and the wall should also be retaining to the base of the copes.

- **Theory based questions:** Candidates should have knowledge of health & safety and knowledge related to their practical test piece.

Additional for Master Craftsman

Guidance notes for Masters Features, including calculation of slope can be found on the DSWA website, www.dswa.org.uk

- **Steps**: Selection of suitable stone for a minimum of four steps. Each tread should contain the minimum number of stones possible. All the treads should be securely walled into the riser of the step above and in to the side walls if

applicable. The tread width and riser height should be even and correct for the application.

- **Step stiles**: The step stile should contain a minimum of three steps and be constructed to comply with current regulations governing step stiles on public rights of way. The steps should be even and offer easy passage over the wall. It is important that each consecutive stone overlaps the one below it to avoid a foot or leg dropping down between them.
- **Squeeze-stile**: The squeeze stile should allow just enough space for a person to pass through but not enough for livestock. There are numerous types of squeeze stile to be found in the UK but for all of these the construction of the stile must be sound due to the constant passage of people. The end copestones, if used, must be especially secure.

- **Arches**: The candidate should display an understanding of how to construct and set up the formwork required to build an arch. The candidate should also have the ability to select the correct stones to form the voussoirs and key stone. The arch when completed must have a reasonable amount of walling above the key stone in addition to the copestones. Corbelled arch: Further to the above the corbelled arch must be constructed of large flat stones well tied back into the surrounding wall. The last stone covering the arch must be large enough to cap the arch, tying as many stones as possible back into the surrounding wall.

- **Pillars**: The round pillar should be vertical, without any bulges and hollows and no deviation from its circular form. All the building stones must be tight and extremely well packed. The copestones must be tight and fit well. The square pillar must also be vertical with no bulges or hollows, it must also not show any signs of twist. Again the pillar should be extremely well packed and the copestones should be tight and well fitted.

- **Square/Right-Angled Corner**: The stones forming the corner should be as long as possible and well tied back into the wall on both the inside and outside of the corner. The correct batter should also be evident on the inside and the outside and the corner should have a solid end copestone.
- **Round Corner:** The round corner must display a regular curve both on the inside and outside face with no bulges or deviation in the curve. The batter should be even on both sides of the wall and the cope stones should be well placed, tight and secure.

- **Round End**: Good batter. The round end should be built with an even batter that seamlessly flows in to the body of the wall. The end should be semicircular and the curve should be even throughout.

Schedules for Assessment

All work must be the unaided work of the candidate.

A square metre, as used in the following schedules, is calculated by the length times the height of the wall, measured on one side of a double-skinned wall.

All horizontal measurements will be made at half the height of the wall. All vertical measurements will be from the base of the foundations or scarcement to the top of the cope stones.

Candidates should be familiar with the setting up and use of walling poles/rods/frames, strings, etc and make use of them during tests.

Walls and features will be marked from both sides.

The Assessors can increase the time available to candidates by 30 minutes at their discretion to allow for any extenuating circumstances such as bad weather etc.

Lunch breaks will be 30 minutes for all timed tests.

Level 1 Test Criteria

- Each candidate to strip down and rebuild a straight-forward free-standing section of wall totalling 2.5 square metres and not less than one metre in height below the copestones.
- Each candidate will be asked a number of theory based questions to demonstrate they have a good knowledge of health & safety as well as the test piece they are building. These questions will be covered during verbal discussions between the Assessor and candidate during the test day.
- The test must be completed within a single, 7.5 hour period and not spread over multiple days.
- Lunch break is in addition to the building time.
- The standard required, places emphasis on sound and solid construction rather than on quality of finish. Note should be taken of how the marks are allocated to different sections of the test.

	Marks available
Stripping out	10
Preparing and laying foundations	24
Building and packing (first lift to throughbands)	20
Placing of throughbands	6
Building and packing (second lift)	20
Copestones and finish	15
General approach and safety	5
TOTAL MARKS POSSIBLE	100
MINIMUM TOTAL MARKS REQUIRED TO PASS	**50**

Theory based questions **Pass or Fail**

Level 2 Test Criteria

- Each candidate to strip down and rebuild a section of wall totalling 2.5 square metres and not less than one metre in height below the cope stones.
- The wall must incorporate a vertical cheekend.
- Each candidate will be asked a number of theory based questions to demonstrate they have a good knowledge of health & safety as well as the test piece they are building. These questions will be covered during verbal discussions between the Assessor and candidate during the test day.
- The test must be completed within a single, 7.5 hour period and not spread over multiple days.
- Lunch break is in addition to the building time.
- The basic principles of construction set out at the start of the booklet are to be followed.
- The standard required, places emphasis on sound and solid construction rather than on quality of finish. Note should be taken of the high marks required for Line and Straightness, Batter or Camber and construction of the Cheekend.

	Marks available
Stripping out	5
Preparing and laying foundations	10
Building and packing (first lift)	12
Placing of throughbands	10
Building and packing (second lift)	12
Line and straightness	12
Batter or camber	12
Copestones and finish	10
Cheekend	26
General approach and safety	6
TOTAL MARKS POSSIBLE	115
MINIMUM TOTAL MARKS REQUIRED TO PASS	**69**

Theory based questions **Pass or Fail**

Level 3 Test Criteria

This test is in two parts, A (Features) and B (Timed - Retaining Wall) which must be applied and paid for separately.

- Candidates must hold the Level 2 qualification, before applying for the Level 3.
- **Part A must be marked and passed before applying for Part B.** Candidates should, however, view the qualification as a whole, and **include practice for the timed section**, whilst working on their features, as well as managing their expectations of what is actually required.
- The features can be part of normal day to day work. However, anyone wishing to build features remote from a designated test site should contact the Training & Education Coordinator for advice first, training@dswa.org.uk.
- If a candidate fails Part A, they must reapply for this section, submitting the relevant fee each time, before moving on to Part B.

Part A content

- Build 5 square metres of curved wall. This is a compulsory element of the Level 3 test. Advice on measuring and setting out of the curve is available on the DSWA website, www.dswa.org.uk.

then build <u>one</u> of the following features:

- 5 square metres of wall incorporating a lunky or waterpen with an opening of at least 500mm x 500mm

or

- 5 square metres of wall at least 1.8m high

or

- 5 square metres of wall on ground with a slope of 20 degrees or more.

	Marks available	Minimum pass mark
Construction of curved wall	25	17
Construction of special feature: high wall or lunky/waterpen or sloping ground	25	17
TOTAL MARKS POSSIBLE	50	
MINIMUM TOTAL MARKS REQUIRED TO PASS PART A	**34**	

Only when Part A is successfully completed can the candidate apply for Part B, which is expected to be taken within twelve months under normal circumstances.

Part B content

- The candidate is required to strip down and rebuild at least 4.5 square metres of wall in total, including foundations and copestones.
- The actual retaining part of the wall must be a minimum of 1.2m in height, measured from base of foundations.
- The wall should be retaining to the base of the copestones.
- Each candidate to answer theory based questions based on health & safety and knowledge related to their practical test piece. These will be covered as a verbal discussion with the Assessor during the course of the test day.
- The work must be completed within a single, 7.5 hour period and not spread over multiple days. Lunch break is in addition to the building time.

Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- Solid secure foundations and preparation of earth bank
- Adequacy of packing
- Selection and placement of building stones
- Sufficient through stones relative to the height of the wall
- Straightness of line and batter.

	Marks available
Stripping out	5
Preparing earth bank and laying foundations	15
Building and packing (first lift)	10
Placing of throughbands	10
Building and packing (second lift)	10
Line and straightness	12
Batter or camber	12
Copestones and finish	10
General approach and safety	6
TOTAL MARKS POSSIBLE	90
MINIMUM TOTAL MARKS REQUIRED TO PASS PART B	**60**

Theory based questions	**Pass or Fail**

If a candidate fails Part B, there is no restriction on the number of times they could reapply for Part B within the year since passing Part A, providing the relevant fee is submitted with each application.

DSWA Master Craftsman Test Criteria

This test is in two parts, A (Features) and B (Timed Piece) which must be applied and paid for separately.

- Candidates must hold the Level 3 qualification before applying for Master Craftsman.
- **Part A must be marked and passed before applying for Part B.**
- The features can be part of normal day to day work. However, anyone wishing to build features remote from a designated test site should contact the Training & Education Coordinator for advice first, training@dswa.org.uk.
- Each feature is to be built within at least 5 square metres of wall, excluding the pillars, which must have a total face area of at least 3.6 square metres.
- The work, including one of the Part A features must demonstrate different building styles, i.e. coursed and random walling and use two different geological stone types. This is to demonstrate that the candidate can work with different types of stone and is competent walling in different styles. Candidates can contact the DSWA Training & Education Coordinator for further guidance on this point if they are unsure of how to proceed.
- The Master Craftsman is not just about the quality of walling, it is also about organisation and timing.
- If a candidate fails Part A they must reapply for this section, submitting the relevant fee each time, before moving on to Part B.

Part A content

- Candidates must build the compulsory element of 5 square metres of wall on sloping ground of at least 30 degrees.

- Candidates must then build **three features**, one from each of the groupings below.

- **At the outset, one** of the features should be chosen and set aside as the Part B Timed test.

Group 1

- A set of at least 4 steps within a minimum width of 0.6m

or

- A step-stile

or

- A squeeze stile.

Group 2

- A semi circular arch with a minimum rise of at least 0.3m above the spring line and a minimum distance of 0.6m from ground level to the underside of the key stone. There must also be some walling above the arch other than the cope stones. Please contact training@dswa.org.uk for further guidance if required.

or

- A square pillar

or

- A round pillar

Note: (pillars at least 1.3m high and with a total face area of at least 3.6m^2)

Group 3

- A square/right-angled corner

or

- A round end

or

- A round corner

Assessors will ask random questions regarding features they have not seen being built in order to assess if correct building procedures have been used. Photos of the building process must be taken by the candidate and provided to the Assessor.

	Marks available	Minimum pass mark
Work on sloping ground 30 degrees or above	24	18
Group 1	24	18
Group 2	24	18
Group 3	24	18
TOTAL MARKS POSSIBLE (for 3 features)	72	
MINIMUM TOTAL MARKS REQUIRED TO PASS PART A (3 features)	**54**	

When Part A is successfully completed the candidate can then apply for Part B, which would be built on a designated test site as part of a pre-arranged test day. Part B is expected to be taken within 12 months under normal circumstances.

Part B content

- The candidate is required to build their chosen feature on site using appropriate stone that can have been selected beforehand but should not be overly dressed or pre-worked.
- The stone should be stripped out in a pile before the test begins but not laid out in a "ready to build" order.
- There are no marks for stripping out in the Master Craftsman test.
- The work should incorporate at least 5 square metres of wall.
- The work must be completed within a single, 7.5 hour period and not spread over multiple days. Lunch break is in addition to the building time.

	Marks available
Preparing and laying foundations	10
Placing of throughbands	10
Building and packing (for 1st and 2nd lift)	20
Line and straightness	10
Batter or camber	10
Copestones and finish	10
General approach and safety	6
Chosen Feature:	24
TOTAL MARKS POSSIBLE	100
MINIMUM TOTAL MARKS REQUIRED TO PASS PART B	**75**

If a candidate fails Part B, there is no restriction on the number of times they can reapply for this section, within the year since passing Part A, providing the relevant fee is submitted with each application.

Candidates must prove their ability to

- Produce quality work at the prescribed work-rate
- Build to a high standard of craftsmanship for all the features required in the test schedule
- Produce quality work in a commercial working situation.

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Information about Lantra Awards (a subsidiary of Lantra) can be obtained from www.lantra.co.uk