



TCA PROLead Leadership course Intellectual Output

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Foreword

Women's sport is experiencing a rapid and exciting period of growth and development. In cycling, there are more opportunities for riders to pursue a full-time athletic career, and to transition to new roles within the sport after competition.

As opportunities in sport develop, player organizations such as The Cyclists' Alliance play an important role in offering valuable resources to members. The TCA is very excited to present the PROLead leadership course as its latest program offering.

This leadership course was developed to encourage female cyclists to invest in their careers both on and off the bike. Our aim is to help develop the next generation of confident female leaders, well equipped with valuable skills to help create positive change when working in various roles in the cycling industry, and beyond the world of sport.

I would like to thank Iris Slappendel and Roos Hoogeboom for their hard work in developing this course. This course was also made possible with the support of the EU Athletes and European Commission.

I've personally benefitted as a rider from the many services offered by the TCA up to this moment, and I look forward to seeing how this new program will continue to evolve in the coming years!

Leah Kirchmann
The Cyclists' Alliance Board Member

1. Introduction

The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA) has participated in the PROLead project. PROLead is a collaborative partnership project coordinated by European Elite Athletes Association (EU Athletes). Partnership include German Sport University Cologne and 8 player associations from different countries and sports. Focusing on the topic of dual careers of athletes, the project aims to enhance leadership skills of athletes, as well as volunteers and staff of player associations, by designing and implementing leadership courses at the European and national level.

As a part of the PROLead project, EU Athletes in cooperation with all partners, designed and delivered a European Leadership course for player association staff and volunteers. The course was developed based on a review of academic literature on sport leadership and leadership education for athletes, input from all partners, and consultations with player associations (members of EU Athletes and World Players Association). On behalf of The Cyclists' Alliance, Iris Slappendel and Roos Hoogeboom took part in this project and participated in the European Leadership Course. The European Leadership Course forms the basis for the TCA PROLead leadership course, a tailored leadership course for staff members and for female professional cyclists. The European Leadership Course has been fundamental to the content of TCA PROLead leadership course.

The purpose of this intellectual output report is to present the design, the rationale behind the module selection, and recommendations for future course delivery. This can serve as guidance to other player associations who might consider developing a leadership course for their players to improve (sports) career circumstances.

About the Cyclists' Alliance and its Leadership course

The Cyclists' Alliance (TCA) is an independent, international association that represents the competitive, economic, and personal interests of all professional female cyclists, counting over 225 female rider members. TCA has the following aims:

- Improve careers and economic opportunities
- Advocate for fairness and equality of treatment
- Provide assistance in resolving all types of disputes
- Provide support during and after pro cycling career
- Elevate the appeal and popularity of professional women's cycling

TCA offers its members:

- An association in which we work together to improve the careers of female pro cyclists and the economy of women's pro cycling
- Representation and influence in the UCI Road Commission, and the national federations
- Representation to race organisers
- A contract health check (and the opportunity to receive a preferential quote from a TCA approved agent to help with negotiations if necessary)
- A contract management platform, with commercial and legal advice available
- Legal advice and arbitration assistance to help identify and resolve disputes
- Education on rider rights
- Resources on financial planning
- Independent nutrition advice
- Independent medical advice
- A dedicated Ethics Officer
- Support during and after a cycling career through TCA's mentor program

The core of the foundation since it was established in 2017 is to support and improve career circumstances for female pro cyclists . The TCA mentorship program, running since 2018, is an example of one our numerous rider oriented initiatives. The TCA Mentor Program (TCAMP) pairs young pro cyclists with more mature pro cyclists to encourage experience and knowledge exchange. The program was restructured in 2020 in collaboration with partners from the cycling industry. TCAMP provides female pro cyclists a structured development program through webinars, resources and workshops. The program aims to support them by providing a network, experience, knowledge exchange and skills development.

For more information about TCAMP, see also:

- [TCAMP reflects on a successful year!](#)
- [Mentorjam Platform joins forces with TCAMP to launch the 2022 Mentorship Program](#)
- [TCAMP presents three days of workshops](#)

2. Goals of the course

TCA's leadership course will be delivered to provide non-formal learning opportunity for cyclists to develop applied skills for positions within cycling (e.g. at federations, women's pro cycling teams etc.) and the cycling industry. There will also be an emphasis on taking a seat at TCA's Rider Council and employment within The Cyclists' Alliance to build continuity for future generations.

In TCAMP and also from general experience within TCA (for example from recruiting members for TCA Riders Council), riders appear to be reluctant to speak up in meetings and/or to stand for elections in the Rider Council, board positions etc. This reluctance appears to perpetuate despite the fact that we have a growing member base from all cycling disciplines. Surveys conducted by the TCA indicate that female pro cyclists often don't know what career paths they can take or what positions they are qualified for. We suspect that a majority of TCA members want to support women's professional cycling but under-estimate their own abilities to do so. This undervaluing of one's own abilities is likely to have an impact on the morale and success of the women's peloton in general, especially when acting for change or advocating for fairness.

From TCA's yearly Rider Survey ([see The Cyclists' Alliance annual rider survey results are revealed](#)) we learn that there is still a vast number of riders (23%) racing with no income from their Continental team. Although the female peloton is highly educated compared to the men peloton, only one third (34%) of the female cyclists are studying at the same time as racing (average age of the respondents is 26). The top 3 drivers for leaving the sport of professional cycling earlier than planned for female cyclists are: financial reasons (41%), starting a family (36%) and pursuing a new career and that racing is too dangerous (31%).

Female pro cyclists also often lack opportunities to develop themselves within their teams. We believe that this is because of limited budgets and may also be influenced by the short-term nature of contracts i.e. why invest in a rider who will leave at the end of the season.

“Despite academic literature starting to show that all dual career education can improve sporting performance, experience from the player associations strongly suggests that too many sport employers do not prioritise the education of their players for life after their sporting career.”
(Report: Desktop research and literature review of leadership education for athletes*)

For these reasons, it is important for TCA to promote dual career among female pro cyclists and to support them for awareness and the development of transferable skills. Leadership skills are directly applicable in team/cycling environments as well as in the (cycling) industry.

By delivering a leadership course for female pro cyclists which addresses the above concerns and challenges, we are helping to ensure that their skills are developed for life during and after sports.

*Uhrich, S. (2020). Desktop research and literature review of leadership education for athletes, PROLead Erasmus+ project. <https://euathletes.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020-PROLead-Report-Review-of-Leadership-Education-for-Athletes.pdf>

Target group

The course is targeted at female pro cyclists (Continental and World Tour level) who have a membership with TCA, (new) staff at TCA, and TCA Rider Council (potential) candidates. Based on membership data, the age will range between 18 – 40 years old and will serve participants across all continents. The target group will be invited for the course via email, online or in-person team visits (done before race season starts), and Rider Council meetings (which are held every 6 weeks).

3. Overview of modules

The course aims to develop soft skills acquired through professional cycling and develop the ability to act as leaders in the cycling community/industry. More specifically:

- Getting important key takeaways to kickstart the journey of self-development and leadership
- Use reflection in finding one's own leadership philosophy
- Developing confidence, leadership skills, and awareness of transferable skills

Rationale of module selection

One of TCA's aims is to leverage and retain knowledge within the women's peloton, therefore we tailor each of the modules to be useful in settings and jobs in women's cycling and related industries. From the mentor program we have learned that female cyclists in general find it hard to think of concrete positions or jobs after ending their cycling careers. We use this course to promote dual career paths by lowering barriers and creating connections. We will invite guest speakers from various positions within women's cycling and the cycling industry in order to meet this aim. A collaboration with one or more of TCA's partners (e.g. TCAMP podium partners) will also be considered.

We place special emphasis on resilience and speaking up, as these competencies are very valuable in high performance environments. There are a number of inequalities and challenges present in women's cycling, including dominance of elite athletes, Euro-centrism, majority male staff, low levels of professionalism and transparency in processes. TCA's mission is to change this for the better i.e. to improve the culture, working conditions, and therefore career prospects within cycling. The modules selected will help professional female cyclists to develop the skills to speak up, advocate for themselves and to best equip themselves for their future.

The course consists of three modules which are:

1. Personal Profile & Effective Communication
2. Speaking Up & Being Heard
3. Resilience & Power in Interpersonal Relationships

1. Personal Profile & Effective Communication

This module is built around the themes of self-awareness, communication styles, and interacting with others. Participants get an understanding of how they and others behave in the workplace with regards to fears, motivators, values and behavioral style. Participants explore their own preferred communication style and learn how this relates to others in their network. They will reflect on their own challenges and areas of development that are necessary to lead oneself and others.

The following topics will be covered:

Introduction on Leadership and Self-awareness

- What is leadership? Self-leadership and leadership over others
- Understanding Emotional Intelligence as part of leadership
- Overview and discussion of leadership styles
- Building self-awareness exercise

Personal Skills & Self-Personal Profile Assessment

- Understanding behavioral styles and personal preferences in the workplace
- What is the DISC theory and how to apply it in the workplace
- Exercise DISC theory

Communication & Decision Making

- What is adaptability?
- Explore situations when adaptation of style or behavior is desirable

Problem Solving

- Explore and understanding the Whole Person Diagram
- Implications of this diagram for the engagement of others
- Explore the differences between managing and leading others
- Exercise Cycling coach

Reflective Diary Exercise

- What gets you out of bed?
- Identify your areas of development
- Using the Reflections form

2. Speaking Up & Being Heard

Participants will gain confidence and improve their ability to speak up and learn how to communicate as a leader in the workplace. They learn how to behave assertively using strategies, tools and techniques to cope with difficult situations.

The following topics will be covered:

Assertiveness

- What is assertiveness?
- Know relevant strategies for assertive behaviour
- How to deal with personal assertiveness and making an impact
- Distinguish between aggressive and passive behaviour and understanding the power of managing reactions

Assertive Language

- Exploring language choices
- How to increase the ability to influence and persuade?
- How to make clear statements/deliver a concise message?
- How to act positively and engage your audience?

Interacting with others

- Using Emotional intelligence in interaction with others
- Define personal rights, needs and boundaries to maintain perspective

Reflective diary exercise

- Reflect on personal learning objectives

3. Resilience & Power in Interpersonal Relationships

Participants get an understanding of 'unhealthy relationships' and learn to observe and subsequently set their own boundaries in order to improve the working environment for themselves and others. They will gain confidence on how to deal with differences and know the pathways to find support.

The following topics will be covered:

Resilience

- What is resilience?
- Resilience in women's professional cycling
- Resilience in leadership
- How to improve resilience

Interpersonal Relationship

- Understanding the impact of pressure and conflict (in high performance environments)
- What is power imbalance?
- How to anticipate power imbalances?

Cultural differences

- Understanding culture at the workplace and why it matters
- How culture hinders or helps performance in teams
- Examine best practices to deal with cultural differences

Finding support and supporting others

- Examine the personal support network and know where to find support outside of it
- How to set boundaries and act accordingly (personal rights)?
- Learn to observe the environment and help others (mentoring)?
- How to build rapport?

Reflection exercise

- Reflect on personal learning objectives

4. Structure and schedule of the course

The course is developed in an online as well as in-person form.

Online

This course is developed and intended to be delivered primarily online for TCA member female pro cyclists (Full Pro members of TCA*). TCA members are located in various continents (e.g. Canada, USA, South-America, Australia, Europe) and they often travel for work. For this reason, in-person delivery is not feasible for most. We plan to use an online communication platform to encourage learning and connection beyond the online classes (for example, [mentorjam.com](https://www.mentorjam.com)).

In-Person

If it is possible, we try to deliver the course in person. This course will be tailored towards female pro cyclists (Full Pro members of TCA*) as well as new staff members of The Cyclists' Alliance or members of TCA's Rider Council. We believe face to face meetings and networking is good for team bonding purposes.

* To be eligible for this course a Full Pro membership is required, female pro cyclists can sign up for a Basic or Full Pro membership with TCA.

Timing

As the majority of TCA members are racing in Europe, the European race calendar is the basis for the TCA PROLead course planning. European racing starts the end of February and ends beginning of October. The online course will be delivered in the off-season i.e. October – February.

Optional Community Project

Participants who are eager to do more will be invited to start a community project. The community project enables the participant to put their acquired skills into practice with guidance and mentorship from the TCA PROLead manager. The purpose of the community project is to give back to their community (e.g. giving back to their cycling club or their primary school). It focuses on the topics of leadership, mental wellbeing and sports. For example, a participant could promote sports and a healthy lifestyle at their former primary school by delivering a talk to the school children. Detailed information on the community project will be given to participants as an option. Deliverables include a PowerPoint presentation, pictures of the event, and a Self-reflection page.

5. Applicant requirements

An application process is established to ensure high commitment from participants during the full duration of the course. A candidate's motivation and current leadership experience is collected via an Online application form, following the Application Scoring Form criteria which are shown below (and can be consulted [here](#)).

Application Scoring Form					
Criteria	Weight	Evidence	+++	---	Score
Reflexibility & Honesty	20%	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to reflect on the influences (their upbringing/background) that make them the leader they currently are <input type="checkbox"/> They are extremely honest in terms of their leadership strengths & gaps <input type="checkbox"/> Able to articulate these strengths & developmental areas in behavioural terms i.e. what they are 'saying & doing'			/20
Passion - Really showed they want the course	20%	<input type="checkbox"/> Seem to be genuinely excited/enthusiastic about going on the programme and how the programme might benefit them <input type="checkbox"/> Willing to share something of themselves e.g. not just their strengths but also their gaps <input type="checkbox"/> Understand that the programme is not just about developing themselves but others e.g. supporting communities/charitable causes/other players etc			/20
Commitment	20%	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear on some of their future goals - where they might see themselves in 3 to 5 years <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly put thought & effort into writing their application <input type="checkbox"/> Understands the time requirement of the programme & provide assurance that they will meet the programme requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation of employment leave attached <input type="checkbox"/> Any other supplementary info			/20
Clear on 'why' and how this course will help them	20%	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to provide a sound rationale on why this programme will help develop them as a leader <input type="checkbox"/> They are extremely honest in terms of their leadership strengths & gaps <input type="checkbox"/> Able to 'paint a picture' of their future and how developing these leadership behaviours will help them in their life/careers/communities or sport <input type="checkbox"/> Have engaged with other aspects of the associations or association's Programmes			/20
Internal criteria	20%	see next page 'Internal Criteria'			/20

Application Internal Scoring Form

Items	Scoring	Scoring Rules	
How many years is this applicant a TCA member?	max 20	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year - 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 2-4 years - 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 + years - 20	
Involvements with TCA Programs	max 20	<input type="checkbox"/> TCAMP - 20 <input type="checkbox"/> Basic interaction - 10	
Engaged in full time education currently?	max 20	<input type="checkbox"/> No - 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate - 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Other - 0	
TCA volunteer?	max 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Current/Past volunteer - 15	
Engagement with TCA & it's endeavours?	max 20	<input type="checkbox"/> Workgroups - 15 <input type="checkbox"/> Committee membership - 15 <input type="checkbox"/> Director - 15 <input type="checkbox"/> Charity engagements - 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Player Appearances for the association - 10	
		Total Score	

6. Grading policy

The requirement to 'graduate' from TCA leadership course is threefold:

1. 100% attendance of the participants is required to fulfill the course objectives and to ensure knowledge and experience exchange is taking place during the modules delivered via workshops.
2. The course manager will evaluate everyone's participation during the workshops based on the annexed participation grading form (see appendix B). Participants will get a notification when they are close to not fulfilling this requirement (grade is lower than 6 on a scale from 1-10 where 10 is the highest score).
3. Learning objectives and learning points will be presented at the Closing session by each of the participants (module 3). Based on their short presentation, participants get feedback/questions and the course manager will give a final grade of 10 (outstanding) to 1 (very poor) (see appendix C).

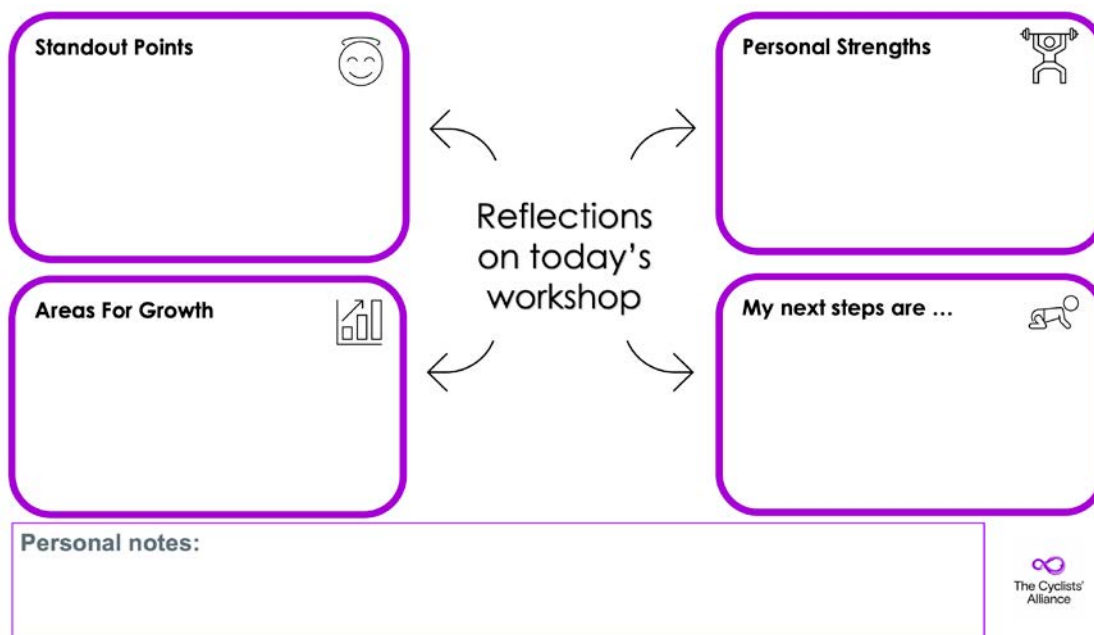
The rationale behind these requirements is that we want participants to actively participate in discussions and Q&A's. We believe participants will benefit most if they engage fully with the course, dare to be vulnerable and share their own experiences and knowledge. From previous webinars/workshops at TCA, we observe that attendees sometimes passively consume content, instead of 'giving back' and contributing. This we want to achieve through providing TCA's leadership course.

Lastly, participants need to fill in the course evaluation forms (see 8. Course Evaluation). Once they are all completed, they are eligible for 'graduation' of TCA's leadership course. We have experienced in the past that not everyone fills in the evaluation forms. We place emphasis on participants' feedback to continuously improve the course and its modules.

Participation Certificate in appendix

Reflection form

Reflection forms are provided to guide participants in formulating personal lessons.



The diagram shows a central text box labeled "Reflections on today's workshop" with four arrows pointing outwards to four rounded rectangular boxes. The top-left box is titled "Standout Points" with a smiley face icon. The top-right box is titled "Personal Strengths" with a trophy icon. The bottom-left box is titled "Areas For Growth" with a bar chart icon. The bottom-right box is titled "My next steps are ..." with a person walking icon. Below these four boxes is a large rectangular box labeled "Personal notes:". The Cyclists' Alliance logo is located in the bottom right corner of the form area.

7. Additional resources

[collecting relevant literature/podcasts etc. for the different modules to be shared with participants in advance or afterwards]

Books:

Option B, Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy, Sheryl Sandberg.

Videos:

https://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

8. Course evaluation

Course evaluation is mandatory for graduation of participants to be able to continuously improve the course and its modules. Course evaluation will be done via Google forms and distributed directly after each of the modules is delivered. We collect feedback on the individual speakers and each of the sessions, and we collect feedback on the overall course when the last module is delivered (see below).

1. Evaluation form Personal Profile & Effective Communication:
<https://forms.gle/tqGggMwKF3eoBfMi8>
2. Evaluation form Speaking Up & Being Heard:
<https://forms.gle/2YXj7wYTBvqkfTGT7>
3. Evaluation form Resilience & Power in Interpersonal Relationships
<https://forms.gle/o9YeJkjFTEFrPZTG8>

Overall Course Evaluation

<https://forms.gle/D1n9SeddAzqJXrwK6>

Evaluation forms are the basis for ongoing quality assessment and improvement of the course year by year.

We want this course to serve as a starting point for each participant's ongoing personal leadership journey and development. We hope that each participant is able to find more direction/purpose and enjoyment in life, feel more satisfied, and are in a position to contribute more to the peloton, the cycling community and to their own wider community.

9. Reflection and best practices

- Change of Course Title:
In the future TCA might change the title of the course to fit more with the audience. For example the following titles will be considered: Self-management of Leaders of the future/Future Female, Leadership & Self-esteem to name a few.
- Change the title of module 1 Personal Profile & Effective Communication:
Personal Profile & Self-Awareness might better reflect the core content of the module as it is about understanding others in relation to ourselves.
- The use of role models to enhance awareness and involvement of athletes on the importance of career support is proven to be a powerful tool to attract future participants (B-WISER (2018)*) for the leadership course. This can be done by collecting testimonials from participants on how the course contributed to their development and use these for promotional purposes on TCA's social media.
- Recognition of Leadership Course:
For future course delivery, recognition by or collaboration with national federations (or Union Cycliste Internationale) could provide a positive incentive for (female) cyclists to invest in their future careers. A system with education credits might be established to prove involvement in professional development for example.

*B-WISER (2018). Main findings of the B-WISER project. Retrieved from http://www.bwiser.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/B-Wiser_3-luik_A5_2018.pdf.

Appendices



A. One-pagers of modules

Module 1. Personal Profile & Effective Communication

Intro & Objectives	What the session is about, personal challenges and desired personal outcomes.
Personal Profile Test Explained	DISC theory explained and understanding your behavioural preferences.
Communication & Decision making	Self-awareness, communication styles and Interacting with others.
Problem solving	Leadership exercise and evaluation.
Closure	Reflective diary exercise.

Participants will enter the course when PPA test and reports are shared with them.

Learning objectives
 Participants get an understanding of how they and others behave at work regarding fears, motivators, values and behavioural style. Understand DISC theory. They will understand their communication style and learn how that relates to others in their network.


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Module 2. Speaking Up & Being Heard

Intro & Objectives

What the session is about, personal assertiveness challenges and desired personal outcomes.

Appreciating the Subject

Behaving assertively, strategies, tools and techniques to cope with difficult situations and to act positively.

Assertiveness Explained

Defining assertive, aggressive and passive behaviour and understanding the power of managing reactions.

Assertive Language

Exploring language choices, adapting communication to suit the audience and make clear statements.

Interacting with others

Behaving in an emotionally intelligent way, knowing personal rights, needs and boundaries to maintain perspective.

Closure

Reflect on personal learning objectives.

Learning objectives

Participants will gain confidence. And will understand and improve their ability to speak up, know relevant strategies for assertive behaviour and possess techniques to cope with difficult situations.



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Module 3. Resilience & Power in Interpersonal Relationships

Intro & Objectives

What the session is about, personal challenges and desired personal outcomes.

Resilience

Subject explained and the implications for professional cycling.

Interpersonal Relationship

Understanding the impact of pressure and conflict.

Cultural Differences

Dealing with cultural differences and the impact of power imbalances.

Closure

Finding support, set boundaries and learn to observe and help others.

Reflect on personal learning objectives.

Learning objectives

Participants get an understanding of 'unhealthy relationships' and learn to observe and subsequently to set their own boundaries in order to improve the working landscape for themselves and others. Gain confidence and know the pathways to find support.



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B. Participation grading form

Did the participant attend the course and its modules? How would you rate their active participation during breakout sessions/discussion? This is to be filled in by the course manager.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QkETA5DSsHimkNLeRe3PY2mLwhsTl1n51g67kJfLJ40/edit#gid=1265542238>

C. Final grading closure session

How would you rate the development of the participant on the following items?

- the participant has a good understanding of self-reflection
- the participant is able to identify areas of improvement for themselves
- the participant is able to come up with practical examples to improve these above mentioned 'areas of improvement'

Grading will be done using the following scale:

10 (Outstanding), 9 (Very good), 8 (Good), 7 (More than satisfactory), 6 (Satisfactory), 5 (Almost satisfactory), 4 (Unsatisfactory), 3 (Very unsatisfactory), 2 (Poor), 1 (Very poor)

Extra for course manager:

What is your feedback sentence for this participant to encourage their own development as a leader? What would be possible next steps? Or did they formulate that themselves already (an extra plus of course).

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QkETA5DSsHimkNLeRe3PY2mLwhsTl1n51g67kJfLJ40/edit#gid=1265542238>

D. Certificate



