

Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures



Standard Operating Procedures: Paddlesports (Kayaking / Open Canoeing / Rafting)

Definition and Scope of Activities

The activities involved use marine equipment of various types to participant on inland/coastal water designated as swimming pools, rivers, lochs, estuaries or open sea.

Locations are water based. Most activity on the water is accessed via jetties, slipways or riverbanks or from the shore.

The major activities covered within this section are as follows:

- Kayaking (sea and inland)
- Open canoeing
- White water rafting
- Pool kayaking
- Orienteering on marine craft (paddle powered)
- Stand up Paddle boarding (SUP)

Precautions to Minimise Hazards

It is essential that the Standard Operating Procedures are followed and that personnel leading the group fully brief the group to pay attention to hazard warning information, remain in control of the activity and follow accredited tuition and activity progression.

The specific hazards identified not exhaustive and additional hazards or combinations may arise during the course of an activity necessitating ongoing attention to minimise or control the risk(s) to a manageable level.

Seasonal Constraints

There are no seasonal constraints for paddle sports and we can deliver watersports all year round. If paddlesports during the colder months are to take place additional control measures should be in place to protect clients from the additional risk of cold and hypothermia. Paddlesports with intermediate / advanced participants can be more appropriate during the colder months because of the increased rainfall and river levels.

Location Constraints/ Tuition Ratios

Rafting

- 1 guide to 8 clients (up to and including grade 3)
- 1 guide to 6 clients (above grade 3)

Participants requiring increased leader supervision or possessing certain disabilities may require additional staffing or reduced participant ratios.

A second adult should be present at the group location with participants under 16 years of age.

A BCU/UKCC L2 coach can supervise rafting activities in water defined by the BCU as Very Sheltered or Sheltered as long as they have had an induction by a SRA / IRF L4 raft guide trainer / assessor.

Paddlesports

We will adhere to the BCU/SCA guidance on Environmental Definitions and Deployment Guidance for Instructors, Coaches and Leaders. Please consult the BCU guidance documents for environmental definitions for each paddle sport discipline. <https://www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/guidance-documents>

Instructor/Leader Qualification matrix for Environment Definitions and Tuition ratios for Paddle sports				
Qualification	Very Sheltered Water	Sheltered Water	Moderate Water	Advanced Water
BCU Level 1 Coach BC NEW Paddlesport Instructor	✓			
BC (UKCC) Level 1 Coach BC Paddlesport Instructor	✓	✓		
BCU Level 2 Coach	✓	✓		
BC (UKCC) Level 2 Coach	✓	✓		
BC Moderate Water Endorsement	✓	✓	✓	
BC Advanced Water Endorsement	✓	✓	✓	✓
BC Coach Award (Sheltered Water)	✓	✓		
BC Coach Award (Moderate Water)	✓	✓	✓	
BC Coach Award (Advanced Water)	✓	✓	✓	✓
BCU Level 3 Coach	✓	✓	✓	
BC (UKCC) Level 3 Coach BC Performance Coach	✓	✓	✓	
BCU Level 4 Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓
BCU Level 5 Coach	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tuition Ratios Instructor / leader:participant				
Solo craft	1:8	1:8	1:6	1:4
Crew/tandem craft	1:12	1:12	1:10	1:4

Bodies contact data relevant to this section are as follows:

- Scottish Canoe Association – www.canoescotland.org
- British Canoe Union – www.bcu.org.uk
- Scottish Rafting Association – www.scottish-rafting-association.org.uk
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award – www.theaward.org.uk

Equipment - Participants

Participants must be adequately equipped for the activity and location in use.

The equipment must be well maintained, serviced and set to the individual operational needs of the participant by experienced accredited personnel e.g. buoyancy aid.

Helmets to be considered on all moving water/surfing or on sea journeys exposed to difficult shore landings.

All participants must have at location access to:

- Wetsuit / windproof / waterproof / protective clothing suitable for the conditions
- Buoyancy aid / life jacket,

and, dependent on activity and location

- First aid
- Whistle
- spare clothing.
- Group Shelter,

In bright sunshine access to sunglasses / hats is advisable.

All canoe/kayak craft must have adequate fixed buoyancy to remain floating horizontally and be capable of being towed under rope-line. Rafts must not be loaded beyond manufacturers guidelines.

On single raft trips, in moderate water or advanced water environments a suitably qualified kayaker with white water rescue training should accompany the raft.

Equipment – Group Safety

In addition, the Group require on activity access to:

- Throw line/tow line
- Watch
- First aid supplies
- Knife

If operating remotely, instructors/leaders should consider taking the following (in line with NGB guidelines):

Generic paddlesport

- Hot drink or means of making one
- Spare food
- Group emergency shelter
- Repair kit (suitable for craft)
- Spare paddle
- Torch

Sea

- VHF Radio
- Flares / LED beacon
- Maps/charts, compass
-

White water

- Slings /Karabiners / pulleys
- Extra rescue rope
- Leashes not to be used in relation to SUPs

Access / Environment

As locations are countryside/sea based there may be access restrictions due to land/water use.

There is a need to ensure water quality is protected from contamination by fuel spillage or rubbish. Every effort should be taken to achieve minimal environmental impact on water either inland or tidal.

Group leaders should be aware of the dangers of polluted water caused either naturally or by animal waste.

Note: Clatto reservoir is regularly contaminated with Blue-Green algae, water quality is monitored and toxicity levels will need to be considered if planning to undertake paddle sports at this location.

RISK ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT REF NO: tay

Activity: Generic Paddle sports

Location: Various

Assessor: DS, JL,DH

Hazard	Who might be harmed?			Existing controls What makes the hazard less risky? What makes these controls effective?	Risk			Further actions Avoid Control at source Take advantage of technology Protect all Make what you have more effective	Target date dd-mm-yy	Responsibility	Completion Date	New Residual Risk
	Public	Client	Leader		Probability	Severity	Rating					
Injuries from equipment		x	x	All staff issuing equipment should be familiar with selecting, sizing and fitting appropriate PPE for paddle sports. Group briefed on using equipment e.g. how to hold paddles/ exit craft safely	2	2	4	None				
Tripping, falling, slipping on steep banking		x	x	Instructor to select appropriate access/ egress point for the craft. Appropriate group briefing/management when entering and exiting craft.	2	2	4	None				
Injury while Loading & unloading and moving boats		x	x	Appropriate group briefing / management when loading and unloading craft. Instructor will ensure craft are secured to vehicle/ trailer before driving.	2	2	4	None				
Entrapment		x	x	Select suitable craft for the group Consider items of clothing / equipment that could cause entrapment. Instructor should confirm capsized protocol with group.	1	5	5	None				
Foot Entrapment	x	x	x	Clients briefed on defensive swimming in moving water. Appropriate footwear for the activity								
Traffic at access point	x	x	x	Instructors to manage appropriately	2	5	10	None				

Further actions approved by: Derek Napier

Signature: D Napier

Date: 9th April, 2026

Urgency of Action = (20>Very High) (16-20 High) (9-15 Moderate) (4-8 Low) (1-3 Very Low)

Severity = 1. Damage 2. Minor Injury 3. +3 Days/Hospitalised 4. Major Injury/Permanent Disability 5. Fatality

Probability = 1. Very Unlikely 2. Unlikely 3. Fairly Likely 4. Likely 5. Very Likely

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