

Swimmer Safety and Rescue

Sample Programme and Session Plans

BCAB Swimmer Safety and Rescue Course

Programme and Session Plans

Introduction

This document provides an example of the British Canoeing Awarding Body (BCAB) Swimmer Safety and Rescue course programme and the accompanying session plans for the 6 modules.

Details of the competency assessment criteria that takes place at the end of the training course, can be found within [Appendix 1](#).

Tutors are required to obtain, understand and consider the participants' current understanding, knowledge, ability, and the craft that they use. This can be done prior to module 1 through introductions or part of a more formal process.

Note: Tutor to participant ratio is maximum 1:8. Numbers can be increased to 1:12 if supported by a suitability qualified, current and experienced coach or leader.

The main focus for the Tutor is to ensure all participants are able to contribute, explore, practice and meet the minimum competency standard. The 7-hour programme does not take into account introductions, information gathering, administration, getting ready or any transportation.

All modules are interactive, practical sessions, discussing and using equipment, exploring and practising the knowledge and skills of a paddler providing safety cover.

Notes:

1. Participants rescue from their chosen craft throughout the course;
2. Care must be taken with the number of participants immersed in the water at one time, especially if buoyancy aids are not worn during swimming activities.

Participant prerequisites

- Participants on the course need to hold as a minimum, a BCAB Personal Performance Award, or equivalent skill level, listed below, due to the paddling environment and the craft control required to complete the course,
- Ability to swim 25 metres in paddling clothing.

Craft	Personal Performance Award
Kayak	Sea Kayak Award Touring Award
Canoe	Canoe Award
Stand Up Paddleboard	SUP Sheltered Water Award

The Swimmer Safety and Rescue course is available to those 16 years of age and over. Tutors should check participants' suitability to attend the training, as well as having appropriate mechanisms for anyone under 18.

Venue

The Swimmer Safety and Rescue course must be delivered in suitable venues that do not exceed an inland moderate water environment.

Course duration

The Swimmer Safety and Rescue course is a 7-hour programme that consists of 6 training modules and an assessment competency. This can be delivered in a day or modular, over a maximum of an eight-week period, that suits the participants.

At the end of the training course, a competency assessment is carried out to ensure those that are certificated have reached the appropriate standard.

For the revalidation requirement every three years, the full course can be attended including the competency assessment or as a stand-alone, the competency assessment can be attended.

Time of year and water temperature

It is crucial that courses are run at appropriate times in the year that provide an appropriate learning environment, enabling the course to be delivered as outlined with participants immersed in the water. Care is advised and additional controls/measures implemented.

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COURSE PROGRAMME

Module	Time	Module Outline
Module 1	60 minutes	The swimming environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety frameworks • The effects of weather
Module 2	30 minutes	Working as part of a team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader and individual responsibilities • Team briefings • Communication • Debrief
Module 3	30 minutes	Clothing and equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal clothing and equipment • Personal welfare • Issued equipment by deployers
Module 4	60 minutes	Supporting swimmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive role • Positioning of the safety cover craft • Dealing with common minor issues • Calling for additional support
Module 5	120 minutes	Stabilising and calling for support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying swimmers in distress • Techniques for supporting a swimmer/casualty from the craft • Calling for immediate assistance • Unconscious / unresponsive
Module 6	30 minutes	Reflection and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection, development and skills checklist • Reminder of remit of training received • Deployer responsibilities

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MODULE 1

Module Title:	The swimming environment
Time:	60 minutes
Module Outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety frameworks • The effects of weather 	
Delivery: <p>As one group, discuss and explore the context of the award and its role within a safety framework, appropriate deployment and effects of weather.</p>	
Safety Frameworks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the various models of safety cover/frameworks and how they may differ in different environments, (e.g. open water swim session, mass participation events), • Explain the role of Swimmer Safety and Rescue from a paddle craft, working as part of a larger team and safety frameworks. <p><u>Note:</u> It is important to emphasise that this course is not seen as appropriate for a paddler to provide safety cover in isolation and must work within a managed framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a group, explore and discuss the safety frameworks expected from a managed swim session. Ask participants what they would expect and supplement. Areas to cover would be a risk assessment, operating procedures, emergency action plan, communications, on water and land-based support, contacting emergency services and first aid cover. 	
Effects of weather: <p>As a group, explore and discuss how weather considerations effect both swimmers and those providing safety cover:</p>	

- Outline the deployers responsibility in considering appropriate conditions for the managed site/event, those participating and safety cover,
- Emphasise the importance for individuals that are providing safety cover to consider their own ability and confidence in paddling in various weathers, and to inform deployers of any concern,
- Discuss and explain how different weather conditions determine safety cover, such as the need to change position, maximising the ability to observe and carry out the duties of safety cover appropriately,
- Discuss the potential risks of thunder and lightning, and understanding the managed process of evacuating and clearing the swim environment,
- Raise awareness of cold-water shock, hypothermia, heat exhaustion, dehydration, and sunstroke.

Note: Weather is also covered in module 3 relating to clothing and equipment choice when providing safety cover.

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MODULE 2

Module Title:	Working as part of a team
Time:	30 minutes
Module Outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader and individual responsibilities • Team briefings • Communication • Debrief 	
Delivery: <p>In a group, explore and discuss the importance of working as part of a team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the different set ups of swim safety including the roles of team leaders, deputies and how teams are managed, • Emphasise the importance of individuals within the team understanding each other's roles, and their positioning, including land-based support, • Management of teams, team briefings (pre and post), importance of rotations and spacing, location of other equipment AED, first aid etc., • Explore different forms of communication that may be used, discuss the benefits and limitations such as hand signals, whistle and radios, • Importance of mechanisms in place to fully debrief about any incident and the need to make a written statement. Participants should also be made aware of the natural emotional response to dealing with an incident and the importance of access and the use of Trauma Risk Management (TRiM). 	
Notes: <p>Throughout, encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group. Signpost to the British Canoeing TRiM service available.</p>	

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MODULE 3

Module Title:	Clothing and equipment
Time:	30 minutes
Module Outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal clothing and equipment • Personal welfare • Issued equipment by deployers 	
Delivery: <p>One group with either their own clothing and equipment or equipment that is provided as part of the course.</p> <p>Note: It is better if participants bring their own clothing and equipment so they can practice and consider uses and limitations.</p> <p>Explore, discuss and show as a group (remembering to keep it within the context of providing swim cover within a managed site/event), as well as promoting the 'clean principle', minimising any snag potentials.</p> <p>Craft overview, safety considerations and features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind participants how to carry out checks, for example, any damage, splits, wear to the structure, deflated/leaks, drain plugs, etc., • Show relevant attachment points that need to be checked for safety and carrying, for example, grab handles, leash attachment points, canoe painters; as well raising awareness of snag potentials, • Highlight the need to use stable craft and limitations of craft being used. <p>Notes: Anyone paddling a Stand-Up Paddleboard must wear a buoyancy aid and quick release waist leash.</p>	

Clothing and equipment worn:

- Highlight the need for considering the time of year, weather and time on the water when choosing appropriate clothing, with the potential of moving slower.
- Discuss and show appropriate personal clothing, windproof footwear and headwear as well raising awareness of snag potentials;

[Equipment for paddling video](#)

Show additional safety equipment that should be considered for their personal welfare, as well as supporting others, taking into consideration the weather conditions:

- Mobile phone in a waterproof case (fully charged),
- Whistle,
- Small first aid kit,
- Spare clothing,
- Food and drink,
- Watch,
- Sun protection.

Issued equipment by deployers

- Discuss and provide examples of some additional equipment that may be issued to you by the deployers, making sure it is secured appropriately and can be easily accessed if needed, and that training is required for any unfamiliar equipment issued.

Throughout, encourage participants to reflect on the learning from this module and openly discuss as a group.

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MODULE 4

Module Title:	Supporting swimmers
Time:	60 minutes
Module Outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive role • Positioning of the safety cover craft • Dealing with common minor issues • Calling for additional support Notes: <p>Care must be taken with the number of participants immersed in the water at one time.</p> <p>Participants to practice from their preferred craft.</p>	
Delivery: Supportive role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and discuss the supportive role of the safety cover from paddlesport craft – reassurance and support if requested, • Explain and practice communicating with the swimmer, • Explore zoning and techniques for scanning, • Discuss the importance of being proactive and what we as Swimmer Safety and Rescue we are looking for, • Consideration and awareness of other support on the water. Position of safety cover craft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate and practice appropriate positionings for providing safety cover – front, side and at the rear. 	

Dealing with common minor issues:

- Discuss, explore and understand how buoyancy is affected by different body mass and swimwear (skin and suits) - without a buoyancy aid as well differences in the turning over of swimmers (skin and suits),
- Set up a practice for candidates to experience swimming in close proximity to others to develop a swimmer's perspective,
- Explore and discuss common issues and how as safety cover, you can recognise and assist swimmers, including cramp, tight wetsuits, panic, initial neurogenic cold shock response or a progressive decrease in swimming efficiency, hypothermia,
- Discuss and consider the use of tow floats by swimmers and added complications by assisting.

Notes

This phase of the course can be tiring for some participants swimming, so ensure they can rest in-between attempts and be able to wear buoyancy aids.

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MODULE 5

Module Title:	Stabilising and calling for support
Time:	120 minutes
Module Outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying swimmers in distress • Techniques for supporting a swimmer/casualty from the craft • Calling for immediate assistance • Unconscious / unresponsive Notes: <p>Care must be taken with the number of participants immersed in the water at one time.</p> <p>Participants to practice from their preferred craft.</p>	
Delivery: <p>Signs of swimmers in distress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain and discuss to ensure all participants understand the different perspectives that a swimmer will have, compared to those providing safety cover, such as lower in the water, goggles, other swimmers etc., • Discuss and explore together the typical characteristics of swimmers in distress, including laying on their back, one hand in the air seeking attention, shouting, cyanosis, changes in swimming stroke and may become vertical, clenched jaw, difficulty in speaking etc.. <p>Techniques for supporting swimmer/casualty from the craft:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate and practice safe and efficient methods of approaching swimmers, • Practice techniques and methods of supporting swimmers from the safety craft, offering a stable platform, revisiting limitations of craft, • Discuss low-risk to high-risk strategies, 	

- Explore and practice if appropriate moving the casualty out of the swim zone.

Calling for immediate assistance:

- In context, discuss when to call for immediate assistance, and better to call and be stood down, rather than delaying initial actions,
- Practice whilst out on the water, methods of calling for immediate assistance and evacuation.

Unconscious / unresponsive:

- Initial explanation re-assuring that although rare, participants do need to be prepared to deal with an unconscious swimmer should it arise,
- Importance of recognising someone who is unconscious/unresponsive.

Throughout demonstrate and allow time for these techniques and stages to be practiced:

- Getting to the casualty,
- Technique for turning the casualty,
- Opening and maintaining an airway from the safety craft,
- Raising the alarm and calling for immediate assistance,
- Support from other team members. Discuss options of transferring the casualty to the land.

Notes:

This phase of the course can be tiring for some participants swimming, so ensure they can rest in-between attempts and able to wear buoyancy aids.

Safety frameworks and principles must be revisited either when setting tasks or as a reflection focus.

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MODULE 6

Module Title:	Reflection and development
Time:	30 minutes
Module Outline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection, development and skills checklist • Reminder of remit of training received • Deployer responsibilities 	
Delivery: <p>Reflections from the course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a group, discuss and share key learning points, what worked well, what was more difficult. Use a format to capture the learning to aid and support individual reflections, • Remind the participants that they need to consider the environment that they provide safety cover for swimmers and that they have the appropriate knowledge, skills and ability to provide safety, • Emphasise that the course is not seen as appropriate for a paddler to provide safety cover in isolation and must work within a managed framework and the deployers responsibilities. <p>Reflections on own learning and areas for development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pairs, discuss your areas of strength and what you would like to develop. Use the skills checklist to aid discussions. <p>Skills checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants complete their skills checklist with the tutor and agree areas for development, and ideas on how to complete the development areas identified. 	

Revalidation:

Remind and explain the importance of revalidation of the training to keep current, and practice.

APPENDIX 1

Competency Assessment

The competency assessment must be completed and an appropriate standard met for participants to receive certification. The competency assessment takes place at the end of the tutored modules, as well as used in isolation for those seeking revalidation (every three years).

Competency Assessment	
Time:	90 minutes
Outline: By the end of the course, learners are required to have demonstrated knowledge and skills as identified in the following three areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported rescue • Personal paddling • Timed rescue Notes: Care must be taken with the number of participants immersed in the water at one time. Participants to be assessed from their preferred craft.	
Supported rescue from chosen craft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The candidate is able to demonstrate getting back in/on their craft. Support can be offered by other support craft, such as other paddle craft or power craft to stabilise and if appropriate assist in emptying their craft, but the candidate must get back in/on their craft <u>without</u> physical assistance. Personal paddling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and set up their craft: The candidate demonstrates the ability, judgement and decision making to select appropriate craft from which they 	

provide safety cover, matched to their personal competence and experience. They will need to correctly set up their craft (e.g. seat, footrest, backrest, airbags, painters, spray deck, leash, etc.),

- Use safe lifting and carrying techniques: The candidate consistently shows safe lifting and carrying techniques to move boats/boards between vehicle/trailer/storage and the launch site (assistance is recommended),
- Effectively launch and land: The candidate consistently shows they can launch and land from access/egress points with the boat/board afloat (e.g. pier, steps, slipway, beach), without using the paddle or an assistant,
- The candidate should be able to manoeuvre their craft accurately and effectively around the environment and, in doing so, draw from a repertoire of skills. For Stand Up Paddleboarders, there is an expectation that these skills will be performed standing,
- It is reasonable to expect the candidate to apply skills from their repertoire that will enable them to consistently and accurately:
 - Maintain control in a straight line, using appropriate correction strokes,
 - Paddle a course that is reasonably straight, with occasional gentle turns,
 - Stop in a controlled manner within a minimum number of strokes (approximately 4),
 - Make effective tight turns around a point, followed by acceleration in a new direction,
 - Able to make an open turn around a point without losing speed,
 - Reverse paddle to manoeuvre their boat into a new position (not required for SUP).

Timed rescue:

- Candidates are required to show that they could rescue an unconscious /unresponsive swimmer 50 metres away,
- Candidates are expected to respond safely and quickly and should have stabilised the situation within 1-minute of the incident. This includes that an

unconscious / unresponsive swimmer would have an open airway, called out for help and has secured the casualty and awaiting further assistance.

Notes:

Participants swimming as part of the safety cover competency can wear buoyancy aids if required.