



AQUATIC ACTIVITIES

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 GENERAL

The Country High School Hostels Authority recognises that regular participation in physical activity is associated with physical and mental wellbeing. Participation in a safe environment provides opportunities for students to enjoy the experience and excitement of physical activity, to develop skills, interact socially and achieve personal goals. Active students are more likely to develop healthy lifestyles as adults, with Country Residential Colleges playing a key role in contributing to this outcome.

Aquatic pursuits such as swimming, snorkelling and surfing are popular recreational activities among students. Sites for such activities range from potentially high-risk areas, such as surf beaches, to lower risk locations, such as swimming pools.

Activities conducted in aquatic environments require a higher degree of risk analysis and management than many other recreational experiences. It is important that college supervisors recognise that the procedures specified must be considered whenever there is a foreseeable risk of students entering or falling into water, including activities such as canoeing, boating and fishing.

The Authority is responsible for the provision of a safe environment that is well managed and responsive to the needs of students and their parents. These *Procedures and Guidelines for Aquatic Activities* provide a clear structure for college supervisors in planning and conducting aquatic activities, both on and off the college site.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

Closed Water

A controlled water environment (still or slow moving) such as a swimming pool, sheltered coastal area or river, dam, waterhole, or inland water body.

College Supervisor-in-Charge

The college supervisor who has the responsibility for the planning and conduct of an activity and has primary responsibility for the students and other supervisors during the activity.

External Provider

- A business that may provide a venue and / or employ adults who have expertise appropriate to a specific activity or activities, or
- An individual who has expertise appropriate to a specific activity or activities and is contracted to provide a service.



Guidelines

Provide advice and examples of good practice for implementing policy and are not compulsory.

Open Water

An uncontrolled water environment that may be fast flowing or turbulent, (white water) such as a surf beach, flowing river or waterway, or tidal coastal water.

Procedures

Provide detailed specification of steps and processes to be observed in system-wide management. Staff are accountable for the implementation of these procedures and any omission or failure to follow a procedure will be regarded as a breach of discipline.

Qualified Adult

An adult who holds the necessary qualification(s) appropriate to the specific activity or activities.

Supervising Adult

An adult who acts in a designated supervisory capacity.

2 PROCEDURES

In assessing and managing the risks associated with the conduct of any aquatic activity, the college manager shall ensure that the college supervisor in charge of the activity will:

- 2.1** assess and minimise potential risks relevant to the:
 - 2.1.1 aquatic environment;
 - 2.1.2 students' swimming and water safety skills;
 - 2.1.3 activities to be conducted;
 - 2.1.4 equipment to be used;
 - 2.1.5 skills of supervising adults; and
 - 2.1.6 involvement of external providers.
- 2.2** determine the required level of supervision;
- 2.3** establish supervision strategies;
- 2.4** provide parents or guardians with information, and seek consent for student participation;
- 2.5** develop a communication strategy;
- 2.6** complete emergency response planning; and
- 2.7** brief students and supervisors.



Each of these points is expanded on the following pages.

It is recommended that the college supervisor-in-charge complete the checklist (Appendix A). It provides staff with clear direction for conducting the risk assessment and management of aquatic activities.

2.1 ASSESS AND MINIMISE RISKS

In undertaking the planning for aquatic activities, the college supervisor-in-charge is to conduct a risk analysis of the:

- 2.1.1 aquatic environment;
- 2.1.2 students' swimming and water safety skills;
- 2.1.3 activities to be conducted;
- 2.1.4 equipment to be used;
- 2.1.5 skills of supervising adults; and
- 2.1.6 involvement of external providers.

2.1.1 ASSESS THE AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

The college supervisor-in-charge must establish the suitability of the venue(s) for the students' skills and experience and the planned aquatic activity.

Consideration must be given to the potential risk of injury.

Selected activity areas are to be appropriately defined.

Venue signage, with respect to diving, must be adhered to.

If the venue is assessed as being unsuitable, an alternative venue is to be selected or the activity does not proceed.

Guidelines

Where practical, the college supervisor-in-charge is to have first-hand knowledge of the venue. Other key sources of information may include the

- venue manager;
- local ranger or land manager;
- professional lifeguard; or
- other colleges or boarding schools that have conducted similar activities at that location.

Potential dangers in aquatic environments may include immersion in deep water, impact injuries from dumping waves or from diving into shallow water, cuts and abrasions from rocks or snags, sunburn, hypothermia, 'shallow-water blackout' (hyperventilation) and marine stings.

College supervisors should recognise that each aquatic environment is unique, and that open-water environments are more hazardous than closed-water environments. The effects of current, wind, waves, tide and land formations are less predictable and more difficult to control, and should be continuously monitored.



It is recommended that the length of shoreline defined for use in an open-water environment should not exceed 100 metres.

In open-water venues the selected activity area may be defined by the use of on-shore markers, flags or natural features and offshore buoys or anchored markers.

College supervisors should consider the risks associated with congestion at a venue.

2.1.2 ASSESS THE STUDENTS' SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY SKILLS

Prior to participation in any aquatic activity, the college supervisor-in-charge must ensure that students have the required swimming and water safety skills to participate safely.

Where diving may be performed, consideration must be given to diving competence and depth of water.

The medical and behavioural conditions of participating students must be known.

A reassessment must be undertaken if circumstances change. For example, it is necessary to assess changes in the condition of the aquatic environment, and in the medical fitness or preparedness of the students to undertake the activity (e.g. conditions such as asthma, epilepsy or fatigue).

Guidelines

The Department of Education's Swimming and Water Safety Continuum may be a useful tool to gauge students' swimming and water safety skills. However, such information is only indicative of the students' skills at the time of assessment and does not guarantee students' safety.

2.1.3 ASSESS THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED

The full range of activities at the venue is to be assessed and decisions made with regard to the selection of activities and areas to be used. These should be consistent with students' skills.

Guidelines

The college supervisor-in-charge should determine the additional skills required by students to participate in activities such as:

- diving or jumping from various heights;
- swimming under water;
- surfing;
- body boarding;
- canoeing; and
- snorkelling.



The college supervisor-in-charge should be aware that activities involving the use of diving towers and springboards, wave pools, interactive or floating equipment, 'lazy rivers' and water slides present a greater risk.

2.1.4 ASSESS THE EQUIPMENT TO BE USED

Any equipment to be used must be checked to ensure that it is safe and in working order.

Guidelines

Details of recommended equipment for a range of aquatic activities is available in the Department of Education's *Procedures and Guidelines for Outdoor Pursuits and Recreational Activities* at <http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/index.cfm>.

2.1.5 ASSESS THE SKILLS OF SUPERVISING ADULTS

The college manager must ensure that there is an adult(s) supervising the activity with appropriate knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during the aquatic activity.

All adults supervising aquatic activities must have experience in, or a demonstrated capacity for, supervising at the selected venue or at similar venues.

Collectively, the adult(s) supervising the aquatic activity must:

- be experienced in identifying and establishing a safe activity environment;
- be capable of effecting a rescue from danger and rendering emergency care;
- be able to monitor weather and environmental conditions before and during activities;
- be able to monitor and assess the physical performance of the students;
- be prepared to move or cancel the activity if conditions become adverse; and
- hold a recognised qualification (see section 2.2.2).

Lifeguards on duty may be used for supervision of students only where their sole responsibility, at that time, is to actively supervise the venue.

2.1.6 ASSESS THE INVOLVEMENT OF EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Where an external provider is used, the college supervisor-in-charge must be satisfied that the provider is competent and holds a minimum of \$10 million public liability insurance.

External providers (and their staff) who supervise students must have current relevant police clearances.

The Country High School Hostels Authority will not accept a disclaimer clause that excludes the venue or facility from liability.



Guidelines

The suitability of an external provider may be determined from the information they provide (via telephone, website or through correspondence) related to:

- recent experience (including maintained log books);
- current qualifications, accreditation and any other relevant training; and
- public liability insurance.

2.2 DETERMINE THE REQUIRED LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

2.2.1 MINIMUM LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

The level of risk in aquatic activities is dynamic and must be constantly monitored and assessed. Supervisory requirements must be considered in accordance with the following risk factors:

- age of the students;
- experience and ability of the students;
- behaviour of the students;
- medical conditions or disabilities;
- capacity of the supervisor(s) of the aquatic activity, e.g. ability, competence and experience;
- type or purpose of the activity to be undertaken;
- nature of the environment, e.g. open or closed water;
- number of users at the venue;
- location of the activity (local or remote); and
- weather and climate.

There must be a minimum of one qualified adult supervising at all aquatic activities (Section 2.2.2).

Many popular venues have various levels of lifeguard services, depending on the time of year. Lifeguards on duty may be considered as a qualified adult only where their sole responsibility, at that time, is to actively supervise the venue.

2.2.2 QUALIFICATIONS

A qualified adult must hold a qualification recognised by the Country High School Hostels Authority.

The college supervisor-in-charge must ensure that the qualification held:

- has current rescue and resuscitation components; or
- that there is an adult present at the venue who is qualified to effect a rescue and administer CPR if required.



For **closed water** environments, recognised qualifications include:

- Level I, II or III Coach (relevant to the specific activity) under the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme;
- RLSSA ¹ Bronze Medallion;
- SLSA ² Bronze Medallion;
- SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate;
- AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate (recognised as being appropriate for swimming pools only);
- RLSSA Swimming Instructors Certificate (recognised as being appropriate for swimming pools only); and
- equivalent award as recognised by the Country High School Hostels Authority.

For **open water** environments, recognised qualifications include:

- Level I, II or III Coach (relevant to the specific activity) under the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme;
- SLSA Bronze Medallion;
- SLSA Surf Rescue Certificate;
- RLSSA Bronze Medallion (is suitable only for a flowing river or waterway); and
- equivalent award as recognised by the Country High Schools Hostels Authority.

Guidelines

It is recommended that all aquatic activities be supervised by a minimum of two adults.

Recognised qualifications are specific to different aquatic environments. Advice should be sought from the relevant service providers.

A cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) qualification is a component of most of the recognised qualifications. It may be acquired from Red Cross, RLSSA, St John Ambulance, or other providers.

All rescue and resuscitation qualifications from RLSSA and SLSA are current for 12 months only.

2.3 ESTABLISH SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

The college supervisor-in-charge is to establish the roles of all college supervisors at the activity.

Where an external provider(s) is used, the college supervisor-in-charge and the manager of the venue, or business, must establish the respective responsibilities of staff.

¹ RLSSA - Royal Life Saving Society of Australia

² SLSA – Surf Life Saving Australia



It is essential that students in the water are actively supervised at all times. That is, the adult(s) supervising the activity has a clear view of all students.

Guidelines

Consideration should be given to positioning, scanning and safety check systems. Detailed information is provided in the Department of Education's *Water-based Excursions Procedures and Guidelines* available at <http://www.eddept.wa.edu.au/regframe/index.cfm>.

2.4 PROVIDE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS WITH INFORMATION, AND SEEK CONSENT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Information must be provided to parents or guardians to enable them to make informed decisions about allowing their children to participate in aquatic activities.

Where such activities are held off the college site, written consent must be obtained from parents or guardians by the college supervisor-in-charge prior to commencement.

Colleges must inform parents and guardians that it is their responsibility to provide information about any known changes to their children's health and fitness.

Guidelines

Consent for aquatic activities may be obtained for the duration of the year.

The college supervisor-in-charge should ensure that parents and guardians of culturally and linguistically diverse students are provided with the necessary information regarding aquatic activities.

2.5 DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Planning for aquatic activities must include the development of a strategy that enables regular communication with all members of the group (e.g. public address system, megaphones, or whistles). The strategy must clearly identify a signal for gaining the full group's attention.

An emergency signal must be selected and explained to all participants.

The communication strategy must enable contact with on-site and off-site support services.

An alternative mode of communication must be available in case of the failure of the primary communication method.



2.6 COMPLETE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING

The college supervisor-in-charge must devise a suitable response plan that will ensure access to emergency support without compromising the safety and welfare of the group or of a casualty.

The college supervisor-in-charge is to ensure that emergency equipment, e.g. rescue tube, paddleboard, is located where it is clearly visible and easily accessible.

The college supervisor-in-charge is to ensure that emergency procedures, including emergency signals, are clearly understood by all participants.

A list of the names of participating students and parent/guardian contact telephone numbers must be readily accessible during aquatic activities.

Guidelines

Suggested emergency equipment includes items such as a rescue tube or board, first aid kit and communication equipment.

Mobile phones should not be relied upon as the sole method of communication. In remote locations, consideration should be given to other means of emergency communication such as EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) or satellite telephone.

2.7 BRIEF STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

The college supervisor-in-charge is responsible for ensuring that all relevant information about responsibilities and obligations is clearly communicated to students and adults supervising the activity. Topics that must be included are:

- emergency procedures and signals;
- methods of communication;
- appropriate use of any equipment;
- roles of supervisors;
- areas demarcated specifically for identified student groups; and
- acceptable behaviour.

Guidelines

The college supervisor-in-charge should consider whether interpreter and translator services are required to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse students understand briefing information such as emergency procedures.



APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST FOR AQUATIC ACTIVITIES

This checklist is intended to assist the college supervisor in-charge to assess and minimise the risks associated with aquatic activities.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AQUATIC ACTIVITY

Briefly describe the activity, i.e. what the students will be doing.

1 ASSESSING THE RISKS

1.1 Assessment of the aquatic environment

- The venue has been assessed and is considered to be appropriate for the students' skills and experience, and the planned activity.
- The college supervisor-in-charge is familiar with this specific venue, at this time of year and under these conditions **OR**
- Advice and information have been sought from the relevant authorities, e.g. venue manager, local government ranger, land manager, professional lifeguard.
- The activity area(s) are clearly defined. **OR**
- The activity area(s) need to be defined.

1.2 Assessment of the students' swimming and water skills

- An assessment of student swimming and water safety skills has been completed.
- Students who do not have the required skills have been identified.
- Accurate information regarding student medical and behavioural conditions is available.



1.3 Assessment of activities

- The full range of activities has been assessed.
- Activities are suitable for the students' age, experience and skills.

1.4 Assessment of equipment

- Equipment to be used is safe and in working order.

1.5 Assessment of supervising adults

- The college supervisor-in-charge has appropriate experience in planning aquatic activities at this or a similar venue.
- Supervising adults have experience in, or a demonstrated capacity for, supervising aquatic activities at this or a similar venue.
- Collectively, the adult(s) supervising the activity has:
 - experience in identifying and establishing a safe activity environment;
 - the capacity to effect a rescue from danger and render emergency care;
 - the capacity to monitor weather and environmental conditions before and during activities;
 - the capacity to monitor the physical performance of the students;
 - the ability to make decisions with regard to moving or cancelling the activity if conditions are adverse; and
 - the recognised qualification(s) to supervise the activity.

1.6 Assessment of external providers

- The external provider(s) has demonstrated that they are competent to supervise aquatic activities.
- The external provider(s) holds a minimum of \$10 million public liability insurance.
- The external provider(s) has a current relevant police clearance.

2 LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

- All risk factors have been considered and the appropriate level of supervision will be in place.
- Appropriately qualified adults to supervise the activity will be provided by the college **OR**
- Appropriately qualified adults to supervise the activity will be provided by external provider(s).



3 SUPERVISION STRATEGIES

- The roles and responsibilities of all supervising adults have been established.
- On-site supervision strategies have been established to ensure a clear view of all students.

4 PARENT OR GUARDIAN INFORMATION AND CONSENT

- All relevant information has been provided to parents/guardians regarding the aquatic activity.
- For an aquatic activity held off the college site, consent forms have been signed and recorded.

5 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Appropriate methods of communication, including emergency signals, have been developed and are understood by all participants.

6 PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES

- An appropriate emergency response plan has been developed and is understood by all participants.
- Rescue equipment is provided by the venue **OR**
- Rescue equipment will be provided by the college and will be clearly visible and readily accessible.

7 BRIEFING FOR STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

- Students and supervisors have been / will be fully briefed on all aspects of the aquatic activity.

College Supervisor-in-Charge _____ Date _____

I am satisfied that appropriate planning has taken place to ensure the safety and welfare of all participants.

College Manager _____ Date _____