

# **Edinburgh University Sub-Aqua Club: Health and Safety Policy**

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# 1. Definitions and Changes

## 1.1 Definitions and clarifications

The following terms and abbreviations are used in this document

- The club – refers to the Edinburgh University Sub-Aqua Club
- Sports Union (SU) – refers to the Edinburgh University Sport Union
- BSAC – British Sub-Aqua Club
- UK – United Kingdom
- H&S – Health and Safety
- DO – Diving Officer
- Man dives – refers to a single dive carried out by a single member of the club independent of their gender and size of the dive group
- SQEP – Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person
- Nationally Qualified Instructor (NQi) – BSAC Open Water Instructor and above
- Risk Assessment – Process of assessing the probability and severity of all risks involved in an activity and decision on whether the risk involved are reasonably acceptable, this process does not stipulate a specific template and may be done as a mental exercise
- Slate management – is a process of recording (usually on a slate) the planned and actual dive time, this provides count of divers in the water and helps work out when divers are overdue
- MCA – Maritime and Coastguard Agency
- RNLI – Royal National Lifeboat Institution

## 1.2 Changes

Issue	Date of Issue	Summary of Change	Authorised by
03	January 2020	Added more information on DO qualifications. Updated to include compressor operations.	Paul Miller Diving Officer 2018-2020
02	March 2013	The policy re-written to provide clear view of the responsibilities of different stakeholders	A Zacheshigriva Diving Officer (2012-2013)
01	October 2010	Original Document	Unknown

## 2. Introduction

Scuba diving has an excellent safety record but it is not without risk, to minimise the risks, various processes and controls are used in the club. This policy document summarises the responsibilities of the club members, the diving and equipment officers, dive managers and instructors. It defines the governing bodies that provide rules and regulations as well as guidance and best practice advice to the club.

Individual rules and regulations are not referenced in this document as that would be impractical.

## 3. Governing Body

The club has two governing bodies. All club activities and processes have to be in line with the rules, regulations and policies of the SU and the BSAC, which is the national governing body for scuba diving in the UK.

In practice the SU regulations relate to the aspects of club regulation, finance and reporting. Whereas the specific diving regulations, hierarchy of authority and on-site safety elements are under the governance of the BSAC.

BSAC provides guidance and training programmes that cover all H&S aspects of the sport. This guidance is under continuous review by the BSAC and other international governing bodies. Best practice is identified and where necessary new regulations are introduced. These changes are cascaded to the club via the official channels and are adopted when applicable.

## 4. Responsibilities of the Club Members

All members of the club have a responsibility to ensure that diving and supporting activities are carried out in a safe manner. In particular club members have the following responsibilities which they are informed about at introductory meetings, annual meetings and ahead of diving trips.

1. To have an adequate third party insurance (provided by BSAC as part of their membership when diving within the UK and within your qualification limits).
2. To complete a medical self-declaration and get it approved by the dive doctor if required.
3. To acknowledge their competence level and qualifications and only do diving that is within their ability.

4. To inform the DO about their dive plans, discuss the plan and agree on the H&S elements.
5. To only take part in diving that is done in line with the regulations and guidance and is approved by the DO.
6. To report at the end of each day of diving to the DO, as a minimum the number of man dives and description of any incidents, near misses or unsafe behaviours.
7. To carry out risk assessment for all diving related activities that they take part in. This takes the form of a SEEDS buddy briefing prior to the dive covering the topics of:
  - a. Safety
  - b. Equipment
  - c. Exercise (including: depth, time, route, turnaround point and decompression management)
  - d. Discipline
  - e. Signals
8. To carry out safety checks before the dives covering the following as a minimum:
  - a. Buoyancy Control
  - b. Gas supply (including alternative source)
  - c. Releases (for de-kitting in case of emergency)
  - d. Extra equipment

## 5. Responsibilities of the Diving Officer

The diving officer (DO) is a special position on the committee. The DO is responsible for the supervision of all diving and diving related activities in the club, although there is an expectation that the DO will provide drive and direction for effective and efficient running of the club as a whole and help develop all club members, his or her main responsibilities are to ensure that safety is never compromised and all club activities are carried out in line with regulations and best practices. The requirement for the DO in a club is stipulated by the BSAC and approved by the SU.

Due to the nature of the position of the DO the post holder has to be a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) as defined by BSAC. The DO has to hold a BSAC certain qualifications, which will be explained below. It is expected that they have good knowledge of the club, its members and equipment, local dive sites and have a broad experience of diving and organising trips. To make it possible to meet these requirements the DO of the club may be a non-student. This is because it can take many years to acquire the necessary experience and skills. This is stated in the club constitution and approved by the SU.

The DO has overall responsibility for safety in the club. He or she takes a proactive role in promoting an effective safety culture. In particular the DO has the following responsibilities:

1. Appoint a suitably qualified Dive Manager.

2. To review dive plans presented by the Dive Managers, assess all safety aspects of the trip and discuss it with the DM, this includes but is not limited to:
  - a. Assessment of the mix of experience of divers and buddy pairings
  - b. Assessment of the dive site, dive platform and equipment
  - c. Assessment of the weather and tides on the day of diving
  - d. Assessment of the contingency plans and rescue management available
  - e. Assessment of the transport used
3. To approve dive trips where the risks involved are reasonable and all applicable regulations are met.
4. To suggest changes to the plan or mitigation options when risks are beyond acceptable or regulations are not adhered to.
5. To veto dives when risks are unacceptable and no mitigation is possible.
6. To oversee branch training. All formal training carried out by the club is done to the BSAC syllabus and has to be approved by the DO. The DO has to ensure that all teaching is properly planned and is carried out by qualified instructors in an appropriate manner.
7. To report any incidents or near misses to the BSAC using the established procedure.
8. To review divers' achievements in training, approve and sign off official diving qualifications when the appropriate level has been obtained and demonstrated. This is vital to ensuring that the standards of diving are maintained to a high level.
9. To disseminate new guidance from the BSAC to the club members, especially the instructors
10. To pay attention to any concerns or suggestions raised by any club members about safety issues
11. To delegate responsibility to a suitable club member if they are unavailable (e.g. out of the county).

### 5.1 Diving Officer qualifications

As the qualifications stipulated by BSAC for the position of DO take considerable time to achieve, below is the cascade of suitable candidates who can fulfill the role. Also mentioned is the protocol if the ideally qualified candidate cannot be appointed.

- **Ideal scenario** - candidate holds the qualification of BSAC Advanced Diver or above and has a minimum instructor qualification of BSAC Open Water Instructor.
- Candidate holds the qualification of BSAC Advanced Diver or above but has no instructor qualification. Candidate becomes DO but a Lead Instructor needs to be appointed. The Lead Instructor must hold the minimum instructor qualification of BSAC Open Water Instructor.
- Candidate holds the qualification BSAC Dive Leader and instructor qualification of BSAC Open Water Instructor. Candidate becomes Acting Diving Officer. A suitably qualified person, perhaps the incumbent DO, should oversee the Acting Diving Officer. This supervisory position can be formally known as Diving Advisor; the precise responsibilities of this role are subject to discussion with the DO and are based on the relevant experience levels of both members. The responsibilities of the

Diving Advisor will change over time as the Acting Diving Officer becomes more experienced and/or achieves the qualification of BSAC Advanced Diver.

- Candidate holds the qualification of BSAC Dive Leader but has no instructor qualifications. Same as above with the addition of a Lead Instructor - the convenient person would be the Diving Advisor.

## 6. Responsibilities of the Dive Manager

All open water diving carried out by the club members is done on dive trips. Each dive trip has a dive manager (and often an assistant dive manager), who has to be approved by the DO. The dive manager would either be an experienced diver (Dive leader as a minimum) or would be working under the supervision of an experienced diver. In any case each dive trip has at least one person trained in dive management and rescue management.

Dive manager has the following H&S responsibilities:

1. To prepare a detailed plan of the dive trip, including risk assessment. The choice of the dive sites is done with consideration of the following factors:
  - a. Divers experience mix
  - b. Site specific hazards (tides, depth, traffic, etc)
  - c. Tides
  - d. Weather forecast
  - e. Journey to the dive site, access and egress
  - f. Emergency plan
2. To discuss the plan with the supervising instructor if applicable and the DO in all cases
3. To monitor the weather conditions near the dive and during the day
4. To reassess the risks if anything on the trip doesn't go to the plan. And if necessary call off diving if it is no longer safe (examples could be: worsening weather, problems with diver's health, missing or malfunctioning equipment, falling behind schedule)
5. To give safety briefing to the divers before the dives
6. To assign SQEP to manage boats and register when divers go in and out of the water (slate management)
7. To report to the DO when diving is complete for the day

## 7. Training and Instructors

All formal training done in the club is carried out in accordance with the BSAC syllabus and rules. All instructors are required to attend regional training events and exams to achieve their qualifications. All practical and the majority of theory training is done under the supervision of a Nationally Qualified Instructor (NQI).

All training plans are reviewed and approved by the DO.

Open water training takes part on dive trips and is supervised by the dive manager, this process is described in section 6 of this document.

Pool training is always supervised by at least one NQI. Just like the open water lessons, each pool lesson starts with a briefing which includes safety considerations and risk assessment. On the day of the pool training the day manger will brief the whole team about pool safety rules and fire alarms.

All BSAC training is done in a progressive manner. This includes teaching dive skills, building experience (such as depth progression) and instructor experience. In practice this means that when a diver or instructor achieves a new qualification which allows them to take part in more advanced activities (such as: deeper diving, dive management, instructing) they build up their experience from simple to complex situations with the supervision of suitably experienced divers before practicing it without supervision.

## 8. Club equipment

The club provides various diving equipment to its members for hire. Some of this equipment is safety critical and requires regular maintenance. The maintenance is carried out by a qualified professional. The register of equipment service is held by the club Equipment Officer.

All club members are trained in the use of the club equipment.

All divers have responsibility to look after the dive equipment, wash it in fresh water after diving, transport and use it with care and for its intended use and report any problems or concerns to the Equipment Officer.

The equipment officer can quarantine equipment which requires maintenance or has been reported as faulty. No divers should use it until the equipment is returned to the usual location.

Club equipment is stored in the club lockup. The fire safety of the lockup is assessed by the Diving and the Equipment Officer and is audited by the SU representative on a regular basis.

It is the responsibility of all lockup users to keep the lockup tidy and ensure good housekeeping.

Club boats are maintained by the club members with the supervision of the Equipment Officer. Maintenance involves annual overhauls, pre-dive preparation and daily checks when diving.

When diving using club boats is planned the DO assesses the experience of divers on the trip to ensure that enough competent boat handlers and coxswains are present.

The club boats are kept up in accordance with the BSAC, MCA and RNLI guidance for small pleasure craft.

The club maintains air compressors for filling diving cylinders. The equipment officer ensures these have been serviced by a qualified engineer in line with the maintenance schedule recommended by the manufacturer. It is the responsibility of the equipment officer and any compressor operator to ensure the compressors' air filters are replaced within their recommended lifetime. The equipment officer will ensure air quality tests are carried out for each club compressor by a qualified technician at regular intervals (at least once yearly).

Any club member using the compressors must have full training on their safe and correct use by a SQEP or be directly supervised by a SQEP.