

Swim England Coaching Policy

Updated January 2022

It is vital for the future of our sport that participants are confident in the quality of activities offered by Swim England affiliated organisations. It is also very important that clubs, administrators, coaches and teachers have the peace of mind that they are covered by appropriate insurance.

The following policy covers Swim England's expectations of clubs in relation to the level of coaching across all disciplines in the club and competition environment. This is also the standard that is required by our insurers in relation to a club's liability insurance.

Coaching expectations for all Club activity

For club coaching and training sessions, Swim England requires that there is at least one active Coach / Level 2 equivalent as a minimum on poolside who is responsible for the activities taking place. For activities such as Open Water all activity should be led by a SEQ Level 2 Coaching Open Water Swimming qualified Coach or equivalent such as British Triathlon Level 2 Coach.

The club must ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken to confirm the level of qualification is appropriate for the activity being delivered. If the level of qualification does not meet the requirements of the activity, the club must evidence how it will address this with a clear set of action steps to develop the coach alongside a robust risk assessment. It is the responsibility of the Club to deliver safe and progressive sessions to their members.

If a coach has an overseas coaching qualification/award then the club must check that it is a valid qualification and will need to understand what this is and what this enables the coach to do. They then must carry out a risk assessment to ensure that the coach is delivering safely, within the parameters of their education and that their delivery meets what could reasonably be expected of a coach working in England. The coach must also have all other relevant requirements e.g. up-to-date DBS and safeguarding. The club/employer must also check the coach has the right to work in the UK.

Coaches are qualified and insured to coach within the scope of their qualification and any other relevant training that they have undertaken and successfully completed. Coaches must not deliver activities beyond the scope of their expertise and competence. This relates to poolside and dry-land training. A Swim England qualified Coach is competent through that qualification to deliver pre and post pool work only as part of dry-land training.

A Swim England Swimming Teacher or Level 2 equivalent may be appropriate to run a swimming club training session in a pool provided that they deliver content within the scope of their qualification and have the appropriate Unit 4 coaching specific bolt-on, 8-10 coaching elements or additional CPD's in addition to their teaching qualification. The session should be planned by an appropriately qualified coach where possible.

Having one Swim England Coach / Level 2 equivalent for all sessions is viewed as a minimum expectation. There may be activities that require higher level coaches or more than one coach at the session. In this instance, the club must ensure that the appropriate number and quality of coaches are present for the activity being undertaken. Please see The Safe Supervision document for appropriate supervision levels for all ages and disciplines.

It is Swim England's recommendation that no coach or teacher delivering a session should also be the pool lifeguard. This role should be undertaken by an appropriately qualified person, as determined by the pool operator, separate to the coaching or teaching team at the session. The National Rescue Award for teaching/coaching is sufficient poolside cover for emergencies as long as a qualified lifeguard is also in attendance.

Any lifeguard role being undertaken by the Club should be within the hire agreement of the pool operator and fully risk assessed by the Club.

If an alternative arrangement is made with the coach also undertaking lifeguarding duties then this must be risk assessed to ensure safe practice, the lifeguarding must be undertaken by appropriately qualified people and agreed with the pool operator.

Coaching expectations for Club Masters / adult only sessions

It is the expectation of Swim England that Masters / adult only clubs that deliver structured and competitive training adhere to the minimum Club affiliation standards of having a Swim England Coach or Level 2 equivalent for all sessions.

All sessions should also have appropriate lifeguard supervision in place.

If a club is delivering social adult only activity that does not lead to any competitive activity, then the session must be appropriately risk assessed to ensure that the club's liability insurance remains in place.

For social adult only activity Swim England recommend that an appropriate responsible adult who is a member of the club is present at the session to oversee the activity from a health and safety perspective. This appropriate person can be a pool lifeguard.

Dry-land training

A Swim England qualified Coach is competent through that qualification to deliver pre and post pool work only as part of dry-land training.

Coaching qualifications for all disciplines introduce principles and methods of coaching. It is expected that coaches will maintain and develop their knowledge through formal and informal learning and apply this in a suitable way with their athletes. This should always be done with athlete welfare and safety at the forefront of thinking and the coach should be confident that she / he can apply knowledge safely and effectively. This should not exceed the competence level of the coach.

As an example, a Coach or Level 2 equivalent may read about basic stretching techniques for post training cool-downs in a reputable resource and apply these with his / her athletes having assessed the risk and the competence of the athletes to perform the stretches safely and effectively but should always ensure anything is done within the scope of their qualification.

The same coach should not however be developing a land-based strength and conditioning programme for athletes unless he / she has a relevant, recognised and valid qualification in this field and is competent to deliver this sort of activity. Such activity would not be covered under the terms of Swim England or Institute of Swimming insurance.

It is impossible to describe all examples of this type, it is for the coach and the club to exercise their judgement having risk assessed activities to determine their suitability, ensuring that the development, safety and welfare of athletes is their primary concern.

Competition

Clubs should undertake a risk assessment to determine the appropriate coaching provision at events. Swim England's expectation is that a Swim England Coach / Level 2 equivalent leads teams at National level events.

The ratio for coaches to athletes (under 18 years of age) is determined in Wavepower 2020-2023 (page 105) and this should be considered alongside the CPSU Safe Sport, Event and Competitions guidance when planning attendance at any event.

It is the expectation of Swim England that when at competitions, coaches poolside should be supported by an appointed Team Manager. For teams with athletes under 18 years of age Swim England Wavepower guidance on ratios and appropriate supervision, both in numbers and gender, should be followed at all times.