

Writing your Operating Procedures

Operating procedures form a very important part of your Centre's supporting documents which should map out the key elements of operation at your venue. This user guide for Instructors and personnel should cover information for someone to run a course/session at your Centre while avoiding too much detail to be irrelevant. Keep the Operating Procedures as simple as possible, the bulk of information remaining generic, with references to specific disciplines or courses where appropriate. Risk Assessments should form a large section of your Operating Procedures and should be easily accessible for cross referencing and updating.

Overview

Start by giving an overview of your Training Centre. Include the aims and objectives of the Centre, who is receiving the tuition and where/when this may occur.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Responsibilities of the Principal and qualified Instructors are laid down in the Operating Standards and Guidelines. This area can be used to outline additional responsibilities specific to the centre (assistant instructors, support staff, boatswain, administrators etc.)
- Scope of authority and responsibilities within the Centres staffing structure
- Management . Local Authority/Club etc. and reporting/management structure

Staffing:

- The day to day staffing of sessions/courses
- Teaching ratios, staff briefings, instructor arrival times and briefing content, levels of instructors working on specific courses can also be included here.
- Child protection; explain your policy for staff who work with children, references taken, any training provided etc. (The Child protection policy should be located in your DSC File and records of any references/self-disclosure/police check forms kept on site in a suitable secure location)
- Records of staff qualifications and certificates must be held in the DSC file (this information is also held electronically on myCentre).

Customers:

- Important information relating to customers, information to be briefed or gathered before during and after their training (resources can be added to the appendices, such as booking forms, next of kin, health declarations etc.)
- Specifics such as booking forms to be complete prior to the course, under 18's to be completed by a parent/guardian, emergency contact and medical information, briefings to be provided, with any requirements such as appropriate clothing to be worn in a joining letter or information sent to candidates prior to their course (electronic booking forms can be set up in myCentre).

Safety:

- Safety at a DSC is paramount, therefore Centres and staff must do all they can to avoid unnecessary risk
- Risk assessments must be carried out and continually updated, helping to shape the operating procedure. For example: Powerboat Risk Assessment, a risk of *'Man Overboard'* might be identified. One of the control measures might be *'brief the students to hold on at all times'*. *'Recovering People from the water – Always switch the engine off when in close proximity to someone in the water'* etc.
- Risk Assessments should be located in your DSC file and referred to in the Operating Procedures. In a written Risk Assessment there are two main areas that must be clearly identified:
 - The risk and...

- The control measure put in place to reduce the risk. You may wish to add who may be affected, severity of risk etc.
- Emergency Action plan: a copy should also be kept in the YATC file and referred to within this section, with an additional copy on display in the centre and on board each of the safety boats
- Communication policy: ensure there is a means of communication between instructors and the shore, whether via hand signals, VHF or any other appropriate means

Operating Area:

- Daily operating: this area may change on a daily basis, but you will have a normal operating area, i.e. the area you usually use for the majority of courses
- This section should also include any additional operating areas, those outside your normal operating areas, such as: Day sailing venues, powerboat passages etc.
- Determine outer limits of your operating area, reference the guidance notes for information on operating area limits
- Diagrams and charts are a good way to define the sailing area with limits and potential hazards clearly marked, descriptions alone can be confusing
- Operating restrictions: Instructors need to be aware of courses that are to be delivered in particular areas and how operating areas are managed:
 - Who makes the decision - Chief/Senior instructor in charge on the day?
 - How - Aims and objectives of the courses being offered, ability of the Customers, environmental conditions and relationships with other water users

Courses/ Training:

- Australian Sailing recognition determines which Programs are offered, depending on equipment and craft available, qualifications of instructors, facilities and operating area
- Use this section to include areas such as:
 - Courses offered
 - General relating information
 - Common practise, e.g. All courses are run by qualified instructors
- You may wish to add any Centre specific information rather than required practise
- Activities being run outside DSC courses should also be included in this section
- Course programmes for each course recognised. Demonstrating how courses will be delivered, taking into consideration the syllabus, operation area, timings and any environment restrictions.

Boats and Equipment:

- All boats / equipment must comply with the standards set out in the Operating Standards and Guidelines and any relevant local legislation
- This section can be used to make reference to required areas such as maintenance logs, boat check procedures, use of boats
- Here are some examples of policies relating to boats that may form part of the Operating Procedures appendices:
 - All craft are checked by Instructors prior to going afloat
 - All craft must carry the necessary equipment as per Operating Standards (A list of the equipment your boats carry should be held in the appendix)
 - All Powerboats have their Kill cords checked prior to and during sessions
 - All Dinghies use mast head flotation on beginner courses
 - Maintenance: maintenance log must be completed at the end of each session and reported to the boatswain

Summary and Layout

Remember, your Operating procedures need to be easily read and understood by your Instructors. Lay them out in a logical order, with a contents page at the beginning and subsequent pages labelled clearly.

- Ensure all necessary supporting paperwork such as booking forms are clearly marked in the appendices
- Train your staff in the operation of the Centre and add a sign sheet at the beginning of the file to confirm they have read and understood the Operating Procedures, forming part of a more comprehensive induction process
- Date the document and amend the date each time the document is reviewed to ensure it stays current. A revision date in the footer can help with maintaining currency
- Your Operating Procedures are a very important aspect of your Centres set-up and if written well they will act as a guide to best practise and will ensure all staff are up to speed with the key elements of operation
- Remember to include all the necessary information to demonstrate that your Centre is well managed and conforms to the guidelines, and include any relevant information regarding training other than Australian Sailing training to ensure that you have procedures in place
- Review your document regularly, ensuring your Operating Procedures reflect what happens in practise at the centre, reviewing as required, especially learning from near miss or incident
- Further help can be obtained from the Australian Sailing training team training@sailing.org.au, or from your MYA or a Australian Sailing Reviewer.

