ADVENTURE ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

# SWIMMING AND WATER ACTIVITIES

Schools must follow the Department’s Excursion Policy and Guidelines and the requirements outlined in this document when planning, conducting and approving adventure activities.

These guidelines are for developing risk management plans specific to the location, activity and group participating. They are not intended to be used as a training manual. Staff instructing the activity must have sufficient knowledge/expertise in the activity.

Schools must follow these guidelines to conduct:

* swimming lessons
* swimming training (e.g. squad, interschool sports teams)
* lifesaving programs
* recreational swimming activities (including fun days, end of year activities).

Schools may decide to:

* use school staff (with appropriate qualifications) to instruct or supervise programs
* outsource instruction and supervision of programs to external providers.

Regardless of whether the swimming or water safety activity is run by school staff or an external provider the information in these guidelines **must** be followed.

Schools which have a pool on school grounds must also read the Swimming Pools on School Grounds policy.

Where an external contractor is chosen to run all or part of the activity, please also see: Excursions Guidelines – External Providers for additional requirements.

## aCTIVITY Definitions

**Instructional swimming** – refers to programs conducted for the purpose of teaching swimming and water safety. Programs should include a variety of activities involving, swimming, water safety, survival techniques, and rescue and emergency procedures. It does not apply to water activities such as recreational swimming, surfing, canoeing, boating etc.

**Lifesaving programs** – lifesaving in its broadest context implies the saving of life through the prevention of accidents, personal survival and the rescue of others; they encompass a range of lifesaving programs including the Bronze Medallion.

**Recreational swimming** – can refer to either structured or unstructured activities in water when teaching swimming and water safety is not the main objective of the activity. These include fun days, end of year activities or water/adventure parks.

## Staffing definitions

**Staff** – any adult approved by the principal who provides supervisory, instructional or educational elements of the activity or excursion. See Excursions Guidelines: Staffing for further details.

**Teacher** – a staff member registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching who provides a supervisory role on a program.

The following roles can be filled by school staff, a teacher or an external provider:

**Designated Instructor** – the appointed staff member on a program who provides the lead technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Instructor** – a staff member who provides professional, technical expertise and supervision for the activity.

**Assistant Instructor** – a staff member who provides assistance to the instructor(s) in the provision of technical expertise and supervision for the activity. An assistant instructor role may be filled by a volunteer (See: Volunteers in Schools Policy).

## vENUE DEFINITIONS

**Swimming pools:** Any structure containing water to a depth greater than 300mm and used primarily for swimming, wading, paddling or the like including a bathing or wading or spa pool. (AS1926.1 – 2012). This definition includes all public, private, school, body corporate, hotel and natural swimming pools if clearly defined.

**Inland waterways:** Inland waterways can be dams, lakes, reservoirs and very slow flowing rivers.

**Swift waterways:** flowing river water which may be categorised according to the international river classification system. This covers water commonly known as ‘moving water’ or ‘white water’ but also refers to flowing water which may not look either ‘swift’ or ‘white’ to an observer. Please see the [International River Classification System](http://www.waterwaysguide.org.au/GradingSystem) for more information.

**Enclosed waterways:** any declared port waters by Maritime Safety Victoria and includes areas such as bays, non-surf beaches, channels and estuaries. See the [Victorian Boating Safety Handbook 2015](http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/recreational-vessel-operators/powerboat/victorian-recreational-boating-safety-handbook) for all listed port waters.

**Coastal waterways:** include all beaches (bay and surf) with direct access to ocean waters, any beach exposed to ocean swell, and any beach that is exposed to currents, rips, strong winds or surf. This may include enclosed waterways at times with these features.

## WATER ENVIRONMENT

If conducting a program at either at an enclosed coastal or open coastal water, schools must consider the following features of water environments:

* **Reef** – a solid object in a surf environment. Reefs can be either rock or coral
* **Rip** – a current that leads away from the shore in surf environments
* **Sand bars** – collections of sand in a body of water, laid down by shifting currents
* **Surf Zone** – the area where ocean swells breaks upon the shore or upon shoals. Foamy, aerated water is caused by the breaking of the waves and helps provide a visual of the surf zone and its features.

Where possible, programs taking place at coastal waterways should be conducted at patrolled beaches. Staff may find [Beachsafe.org.au](https://beachsafe.org.au/) a useful reference when planning activities in coastal waterways.

## Student preparAtion and skills

### Student medical conditions

The teacher in charge must ensure that:

* students suffering from contagious infections are not permitted to enter water environments until they have recovered, e.g. ear and throat infections, colds, papillomas
* supervising staff/instructors know the medical histories of students in the program, particularly with respect to epilepsy, diabetes, asthma and heart conditions
* for students with chronic illnesses:
  + parent permission is obtained before the student is involved in a water program
  + parents are advised to obtain medical advice if there is any doubt about the student’s reaction to any aspect of the program.

For information on planning and responding to specific medical conditions see Excursions Resources – Sample Emergency Response Procedures.

### Students with additional needs

The teacher in charge must ensure that:

* all staff instructing and supervising the activity have sufficient information on the learning needs of the students
* reasonable adjustments are made to the activity so that all students can participate.

### Swimming and water safety competencies

Planning for all swimming and water safety activities must begin with an assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in water environments.

Students can be classified as either:

* **Beginner swimmers**

Students with little or no experience including in shallow water.

* **Intermediate swimmers**

Students with basic skills, able to swim 25 metres with a recognisable stroke.

* **Advanced swimmers**

Students able to swim 50 to 100 meters using two recognisable strokes and to demonstrate one survival stroke in deep water.

Schools must consider the swimming competency of students in particular water environments when deciding on the type of swimming program and the venue.

The preparation of students will vary according to their age, ability and experience, the venue and the nature of the proposed swimming and water safety activity.

The assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in the activity should be documented using [[https://www.education.vic.gov.au/_layouts/images/icdoc.png](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/participrep.doc)Documentation of Participant Preparation, Prerequisite Skills/Knowledge​ ​ (doc - 139kb)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/participrep.doc).

**For all venues**

Students must be given directions about safe swimming, appropriate boundaries, standards of behaviour and emergency procedures relevant to the particular location.

**Enclosed and coastal waterways**

Before entering the water, students must understand (where applicable to the location):

* coastal and surf hazards
* how to identify a rip
* how to swim if caught in a rip
* safe areas and exit points to escape from rips and other hazards
* the designated swimming area, indicated by flags and landmarks
* safety and emergency procedures and considerations for the surf location
* surf signals and the need to watch carefully for signals at all times.

**Swift waterways**

For swimming in rivers, students must be taught about relevant river hydrology features and dangers and how to avoid them. Students entering a river environment must understand dangers such as holes, foot entrapments, strainers, sieves and the power of flowing water.

Students must be trained in whitewater swimming and rescue techniques before swimming in swiftwater.

Students must have an understanding of:

* how to swim in swiftwater including defensive swimming and aggressive swimming positions
* throw bag retrieval rescues
* how to signal for help
* how to identify safe areas and eddies
* how to identify holes, strainers and sieves
* safety and emergency procedures for rivers
* river signals and the need to watch carefully for signals at all times.

See Canoeing and Kayaking Guidelines for further information about swiftwater river environments.

## SUPERVISION AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY ACTIVITIES

Regardless of the type of swimming and water safety activity or the mode of its delivery, students must be supervised at all times, and a teacher employed by the Department or the school council must:

* + be in attendance
  + have overall responsibility for the activity and legal responsibility for emergency procedures.

The type of program will determine the supervision requirements.

The teacher in charge is responsible for the supervision strategy, which must be endorsed by the school principal as part of the excursion approval process. Staff members must supervise students according to that strategy, and in accordance with their duty of care.

Students not directly participating in the activity must be separately supervised in line with Excursions Guidelines – Supervision.

##### Lifeguards

Lifeguards at pools and beaches can only be included in staff–student ratios if they do not have general lifeguard duties at the location at that time and their sole responsibility during the activity is for the students undertaking the activity.

If a student needs to be rescued, the on-duty lifeguard will usually take responsibility for the rescue. If an on-duty lifeguard is not able to assist, a staff member must undertake the rescue.

To ensure that there is no confusion between the roles of on-duty lifeguards and excursion staff members, staff must consult the relevant lifeguard on arrival at the location.

### Safety – risk management considerations

Staff must assess location type, water conditions, rescue equipment on site and the ability of swimmers prior to conducting any swimming activity. Staff should consider the activity, staff, participants and venue when assessing risk.

A school must have a clearly written set of emergency procedures that:

* is understood by those involved in the program
* includes
* rescue, resuscitation and first aid procedures
* how to contact a doctor, ambulance or emergency service
* the supervision and safety of all other students at the venue
* is in harmony with the procedures used by pool owners, pool managers or rescue and life-saving patrols and outlines areas of responsibilities and organisation required to carry out a rescue and maintain student safety.

All staff must be prepared for and able to cope with an emergency rescue and be able to identify which staff are qualified to apply CPR.

Instructors must be identifiable during the activity. This may include the use of rash vests, wetsuits, caps etc.

All instructors must be dressed appropriately to perform an immediate contact rescue.

Where appropriate, staff members should carry a whistle or other device for signalling swimmers and other staff.

A 'buddy' system can used during lessons or water activities and incorporated into the risk register as a check of student safety.

Please see Excursions Guidelines ­– Risk Management Planning, Emergency Management Planning for further information.

### Safety – equipment

All equipment used must be in sound condition and in suitable condition.

Rescue aids such as ropes, poles and approved buoyancy devices (including life jackets, throwable flotation devices) must be immediately available where students are swimming or diving.

The need for additional rescue aids for reaching and throwing, for example, flotation aids, poles and throw ropes, surfboards must be identified and obtained prior to the swimming activity.

For recreational swimming activities, type 1, 2 or 3 life jackets may be used. See: [Life jacket laws](http://www.wearalifejacket.vic.gov.au/lifejacket-laws).

### Clothing

Before and after the activity, students need to protect themselves from the sun with shirt and hat, and cold and wet weather with a towel and change of clothing, including a jumper, long pants and jacket. Sun protection clothing should be handy to students when they leave the water.

Students who own sunglasses should be encouraged to bring and wear them when required.

## SWIMMING LESSONS AND SWIMMING TRAINING ­– QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPERVISION

The table below describes the required qualifications and ratios for **swimming lessons or swimming training**, regardless of the mode of delivery (internal or external).

All instructors conducting swimming lessons or swimming training must have a current CPR qualification.

* [Documentation of staff qualifications and experience (doc - 151kb)](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/staffqual.doc) must be used to document staff experience and training in lieu of the listed qualifications.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Venue | Required qualifications | Ratio (instructor: student) | |
| **Swimming pools** | At least one instructor must have one of the following:   * AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate * Swim Australia Teacher * Swim Australia Teacher of Competitive Swimming * Life Saving Victoria – Swimming and Water Safety Teacher * Skill Set SISSS00112 ‘Swimming and Water Safety Teacher’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)   All other instructors must have:   * experience in instructing swimming and water safety activities. | **Beginner** | **1:10** |
| **Intermediate** | **1:12** |
| **Advanced** | **1:15** |
| **Inland waterways** | At least one instructor must have one of the following:   * AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate * Swim Australia Teacher * Swim Australia Teacher of Competitive Swimming * Life Saving Victoria – Swimming and Water Safety Teacher   And one of:   * Royal Life Saving Bronze Medallion * Life Saving Victoria Inland Waterway Lifesaving Certificate   All other instructors must have:   * experience in instructing swimming and water safety activities. | **1:10** | |
| **Enclosed waterways** | At least one instructor must have one of the following:   * AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate * Swim Australia Teacher * Swim Australia Teacher of Competitive Swimming * Life Saving Victoria – Swimming and Water Safety Teacher   And one of:   * Royal Life Saving Bronze Medallion * Life Saving Victoria Inland Waterway Lifesaving Certificate   All other instructors must have:   * experience in instructing swimming and water safety activities. | **1:10** | |
| **Open coastal waterways** | At least one instructor must have one of the following:   * AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate * Swim Australia Teacher * Swim Australia Teacher of Competitive Swimming * Life Saving Victoria – Swimming and Water Safety Teacher   And one of:   * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion * Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Lifesaving Certificate   All other instructors must have one of the following:   * Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Lifesaving Certificate * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion | **1:5** | |

## LIFESAVING PROGRAMS – QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPERVISION

The table below describes the required qualifications and ratios for the instruction of lifesaving programs, regardless of the mode of delivery (internal or external).

All instructors conducting lifesaving programs must have a current CPR qualification.

 [Documentation of staff qualifications and experience (doc - 151kb)](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/staffqual.doc) must be used to document staff experience and training in lieu of the listed qualifications.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Venue | Required qualifications | Ratio (instructor: student) | |
| **Swimming pools** | The designated instructor must have one of the following:   * Pool Lifeguard certificate * Royal Life Saving Bronze medallion * AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate * Life Saving Victoria Swimming and Water Safety Teacher * Swim Australia Teacher * Skill Set SISSS00112 ‘Swimming and Water Safety Teacher’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) * Skill Set SISSS00111 ‘Pool Lifeguard’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)   All other instructors must have:   * Experience in lifesaving activities | **Beginner** | **1:10** |
| **Intermediate** | **1:12** |
| **Advanced** | **1:15** |
| **Inland waterways** | All instructors must have one of the following:   * Life Saving Victoria Inland Waterway Life Saving Certificate * Royal Life Saving Bronze Medallion * Royal Life Saving Pool Lifeguard Certificate * Skill Set SISSS00112 ‘Swimming and Water Safety Teacher’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) * Skill Set SISSS00111 ‘Pool Lifeguard’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) | **1:10** | |
| **Enclosed waterways** | All instructors must have one of the following:   * Life Saving Victoria Inland Waterway Lifesaving Certificate * Royal Life Saving Bronze Medallion * Royal Life Saving Pool Lifeguard Certificate * Skill Set SISSS00112 ‘Swimming and Water Safety Teacher’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) * a recognised Swiftwater rescue qualification | **1:10** | |
| **Open coastal waterways** | All instructors must have one of the following:   * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Rescue Certificate * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion * Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Life Saving Certificate | **1:5** | |

## RECREATIONAL SWIMMING ­– QUALIFICATIONS AND SUPERVISION

Recreational swimming occurs when the purpose of the swimming or water safety session is neither instructional nor educational.

Before conducting any recreational swimming activity staff should assess the appropriateness of the location with consideration to:

* the environment
* ability and experience of students
* ability and experience of staff
* risk management strategies.

Staff must conduct a Pre-Activity Check as outlined in Excursions Guidelines – Pre-Activity Check.

It may be necessary to increase the staff allocation based on ability to observe or monitor students on activity with consideration to:

* students (medical conditions, age, physical, mental and emotional maturity, ability and experience)
* group (dynamics and size)
* staff (medical conditions, age, ability and experience, qualifications and skills)
* location (remoteness, communications and environmental conditions).

Reasons for increasing staff allocations must be documented.

The table below describes the required qualifications and supervision ratios for **recreational swimming**, regardless of the mode of delivery (internal or external).

 [Documentation of staff qualifications and experience (doc - 151kb)](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/safety/staffqual.doc) be used to document staff experience and training in lieu of the listed qualifications.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Venue | Required qualifications | Staff | Student |
| **Swimming pools**  **Swimming pools** | The designated recreational swimming supervisor must hold at least one of the following:   * AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety Certificate * Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion * Royal Life Saving Society Pool Lifeguard Certificate * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Rescue Certificate * Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Lifesaving Certificate * Life Saving Victoria – Swimming and Water Safety Teacher * Skill Set SISSS00112 ‘Swimming and Water Safety Teacher’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) * Skill Set SISSS00111 ‘Pool Lifeguard’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)   The designated assistant to the supervisor must:   * have experience in the activity at the level being offered to students * be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity * be competent in emergency response procedures, including current CPR * have conferred with the instructor to establish the emergency response and supervision responsibilities. | **2** | **1–20** |
| **3** | **21–30** |
| **Inland waterways** | The designated recreational swimming staff must hold at least one of the following:   * Life Saving Victoria Inland Waterway Lifesaving Certificate * Royal Life Saving Society Bronze Medallion * Royal Life Saving Society Pool Lifeguard Certificate * Life Saving Victoria – Swimming and Water Safety Teacher * Recognised Australian White Water Rescue Training. * Skill Set SISSS00112 ‘Swimming and Water Safety Teacher’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) * Skill Set SISSS00111 ‘Pool Lifeguard’ from an accredited provider. See [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)   The designated assistant to the supervisor must:   * have experience in the activity at the level being offered to students * be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity * be competent in emergency response procedures, including CPR * have conferred with the instructor to establish the emergency response and supervision responsibilities | **2**  **3** | **1–20**  **1–30** |
| **Enclosed waterways** | All supervising staff must hold at least one of the following:   * Surf Life Saving Australia Bronze Medallion * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Rescue Certificate * Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Life Saving Certificate * for non-surf environments, recognised Australian Swift water Rescue Training. | **2**  **3** | **1–20**  **21–30** |
| **Coastal waterways** | All supervising staff must hold at least one of the following:   * Surf Life Saving Australia Bronze Medallion * Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Rescue Certificate * Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Life Saving Certificate * for non-surf environments, recognised Australian Swift water Rescue Training. | **2**  **3** | **1–10**  **11–15** |
| **Swiftwater** | All supervising staff must:   * hold a recognised Swiftwater rescue qualification. | **2**  **3** | **1–10**  **11–15** |

## Peak bodies and expert advice

AUSTSWIM <https://austswim.com.au/>

Life Saving Victoria <https://lsv.com.au/>

Surf Life Saving Australia <https://sls.com.au/>

Royal Life Saving Australia <https://www.royallifesaving.com.au/>

Swim Australia <http://www.swimaustralia.org.au/>

White Water Rescue Training <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/SISOWWR404A>

Transport Safety Victoria – Maritime Safety <https://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety>

Outdoors Victoria <https://outdoorsvictoria.org.au/>

International River Classifications <http://www.waterwaysguide.org.au/GradingSystem>

Victorian Public Pools Register [https://lsv.com.au/pool-safety-services/victorian-pool- register/](https://lsv.com.au/pool-safety-services/victorian-pool-%20%20%20register/)

Surf Life Saving Australia – BeachSafe <https://beachsafe.org.au/>

Queries relating directly to instructional swimming and water safety programs can be emailed to: [school.swimming@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:school.swimming@edumail.vic.gov.au) or phone 4334 0523.

Queries relating to recreational swimming can be emailed to: [community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au)

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