ADVENTURE ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

# Surfing and Stand Up Paddle Boarding

Schools must follow the Department’s Excursion Policy nd 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.

Surfing involves riding a surfboard, bodyboard, stand-up-paddle board (SUP) or paddling a surf paddle craft at beaches with direct ocean access. The term Surfing will be used throughout this section to include all these types of surf activities.

These guidelines apply to the learning of surfing and surf training. For bodysurfing, see the guidelines for Swimming and Water Activities.

These guidelines do not cover using kayak style craft in Type 3 locations such as sit on top kayaks and sea kayaks. These are covered under the Sea Kayak guidelines.

If an overnight camping component is planned, please also refer to Camping guidelines.

## ACTIVITY DEFINITIONS

**Surfing** – to float on the face of a breaking wave on a board or craft that slides across the top of the water.

**Body Board** – a short, light surfboard used for surfing in a more prone or kneeling position.

**Stand up paddle boarding (SUP)** – Stand up paddle boarding is an offshoot of surfing. The surfer uses a paddle to propel themselves forward. SUPs can be used in the surf or on flat water as they have a paddle to aid propulsion. SUPs are often bigger, more stable and buoyant than traditional surfboards. SUPs can also be inflatable.

**Surf paddle craft** – this is often a sit-on-top style paddle craft, with a shape similar to a surfboard, used for surfing. Surf paddle craft may include craft such as a ‘Wave ski’ that can combine seats, fins, foot straps and even seat belts to secure a rider on the craft. A kayak style paddle is used to propel the rider. These guidelines do not cover using kayak style craft in enclosed and coastal waterways such as sit on top kayaks and sea kayaks. These are covered under the Sea Kayaking guidelines.

**Leg rope** – a length of cord attaching a surfer’s ankle to the tail of the surfboard. This prevents the board from being carried away from the surfer and becoming a danger to others.

**Rescue tube** ­– a flotation device with a harness and rope attached, which rescuers can use to support a swimmer or surfer in distress.

**Wrist rope** – a length of cord attaching a body-boarder’s wrist to the board. This prevents the board from being carried away from the surfer and becoming a danger to others.

## VENUE Definitions

Aquatic excursion supervision and qualifications in these guidelines are built around the following location definitions:

**Inland waterways** – inland waterways can be dams, lakes, reservoirs and very slow flowing rivers with no swift water features. Inland waterways may vary widely in depth, water visibility, turbidity, temperatures and hazards.

**Swiftwater** –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.

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

**Coastal inshore waterways** –include all beaches 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.

**Coastal offshore** – all waters greater than two nautical miles from the coast.

## 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, or a volunteer (See [Volunteers in Schools](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/volunteers/policy) policy).

**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).

## 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. Where beaches are not patrolled, appropriate rescue aids need to be available, with staff members trained in their use and available to respond to an emergency. Staff must assess the level of risk of a particular beach for surfing.

Surf activities may be affected by, yet not limited to environmental conditions such as turbidity, size of the body of water, the strength of tides and currents, the presence and power of waves, water temperature surrounding landscape and vegetation, prevailing weather and micro climates.

Given the range of different conditions that might exist between apparently similar surfing venues, adequate knowledge of the specific beach should be obtained before school activities are conducted. In south-eastern Australia, there can be marked differences between beaches, even beaches in close proximity to each other. These differences include human made hazards, marine life and seaweed, water temperature, sand bars, rips, reefs, currents and tides.

Shallow beach break venues should be chosen for beginners.

## Student preparAtion and skills

Planning for surfing activities should begin with an assessment of students’ current knowledge, skills and experience in surfing, swimming and 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 metres 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 venue, staff-student ratio, risk management plan and emergency response plan.

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).

First time surfers and beginners must undertake competent instruction in basic skills, taking into account factors such as activity area conditions, weather, terrain and progress of students.

The instructor should ascertain the previous experience of each student.

Instructional staff must brief students on:

* equipment, clothing and footwear that is suitable for the activity and location
* safety measures appropriate to control risks associated with the activity and the environment
* minimal environmental impact techniques relevant to the activity and location
* historical and cultural considerations relevant to the activity and location
* activity scope and boundaries
* communication and communication signals
* relevant terminology.
* navigating surf and swimming methods.

Students should also undertake navigation training suitable for the location and activity.

Before undertaking surfing activities, students should have demonstrated basic swimming and water safety skills in flat water:

* competent and confident swimming
* showing how a flotation aid may be used as a support for one minute
* survival sculling, floating or treading water for a total of five minutes
* waving one arm as if signalling for help.

\*When surfing at beaches in coastal waterways students *must* have demonstrated these basic swimming and water safety skills recently.

Beginners must be taught basic water skills as soon as possible so they are able to:

* demonstrate the ability to submerge and resurface competently
* physically handle the surfboard in the surf
* fall off the board safely.

In addition to these skills, before entering the surf participants should be able to:

* identify a rip and other hazards
* identify safer areas and exit points to escape from rips and other hazards
* identify the designated surfing area, indicated by flags and landmarks
* understand safety and emergency procedures and potentially dangerous aspects of the surf location
* recognise surf signals and the need to watch carefully for signals at all times.

## Equipment

All equipment used must be in sound condition, suitable for the activity and meet applicable industry safety standards.

##### Surfboards

Beginner surfers must only use soft boards. Leg ropes must be worn.

##### Bodyboards

Swim fins are recommended for surfing with bodyboards. Wrist leashes must be worn.

##### Safety equipment

A rescue tube and/or a board should be readily available to staff for rescue purposes.

Staff members should carry a whistle or other device for signalling to swimmers and other staff.

##### Helmets

Helmets may be worn for all surf activities. Helmets should be worn when collision with solid objects such as reefs and structures is likely.

##### Life jackets

The wearing of a securely fitted Australian certified life jacket is required under Victorian marine safety law on all paddle craft that are underway on all Victorian waters.

Life jackets should be worn for all stand up paddle boarding activities. Life jackets must be worn for stand up paddle boarding when more than 400 metres from shore.

When required, Type 1, 2 or 3 Life jackets must be used for activities. 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 should wear wetsuits of suitable thickness for warmth and buoyancy, as well as for protection from the cold, the sun and knocks to the body from the surf craft.

Wetsuit booties or appropriate footwear may be worn dependant on location.

## Experience and qualifications

Staff instructing the activity should have sufficient knowledge and experience of the activity and the activity environment to operate in all reasonably foreseeable conditions.

##### Surfing

The designated surfing instructor(s) must hold both a current surf lifesaving qualification and a coaching qualification/documented experience, that is a:

* Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion
* Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Lifesaving Certificate

and

* Level One coaching qualification from Surfing Australia, or
* proven equivalent documented training and experience from another training provider or educational institution.

The designated assistant to the instructor must be a confident swimmer and have a:

* Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion or,
* Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Life Saving Certificate

and

* have experience in the activity at the level being offered to students
* be able to assume a supervisory role during the activity
* be able to competently assist in emergency response procedures, including CPR
* have conferred with the instructor to establish the emergency response and supervision responsibilities.

##### Stand-up-paddle boarding

**Inland and enclosed waterways**

This activity is done in flat water conditions on inland and enclosed waterways and is not suitable for coastal waterways. If conditions at an enclosed waterway destination are consistent with the coastal waterway definition, the coastal qualifications and ratios should be used.

The designated SUP instructor(s) must hold both a current surf lifesaving qualification and a SUP coaching qualification/documented experience, that is a:

* Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion, or
* Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Lifesaving Certificate

and

* SUP coaching qualification from Surfing Australia, or
* proven equivalent documented training and experience from another training provider or educational institution.

**Coastal waterways**

The designated SUP instructor(s) must hold both a current surf lifesaving qualification and a SUP coaching qualification with surfing module/documented experience, that is a:

* Surf Life Saving Australia Surf Bronze Medallion or,
* Life Saving Victoria Community Surf Lifesaving Certificate

and

* SUP coaching qualification from Surfing Australia including additional Surf modules, or
* proven equivalent documented training and experience from another training provider or educational institution.

If students are bodysurfing or recreational surf swimming, refer to the guidelines for Swimming and Water Activities.

 [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.

Where an external contractor is chosen to run all or part of this activity, see: Excursions Guidelines – External Providers.

## Supervision

Supervision is a critical factor in managing risk in the outdoors.

A minimum of two staff members must be present for each activity, one with responsibility for activity instruction and the other to assist the instructor.

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 following table shows the minimum staff-to-student allocation that must be used for surfing:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Inland and enclosed waterways** | |
| Staff numbers | Student numbers |
| 2 | 1–20 |
| 3 | 21–30 |
| Coastal waterways | |
| Staff numbers | Student numbers |
| 2 | 1–16 |
| 3 | 17–24 |

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. It is the role of the teacher in charge to clearly and adequately explain the supervision strategy to all participating staff members.

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

## Peak bodies and expert advice

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

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

Royal Life Saving Society – Australia - Bronze Medallion <http://www.royallifesaving.com.au/training/bronze-medallion>

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

Surfing Australia <https://www.surfingaustralia.com/>

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

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

For further enquiries, please contact [community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au)

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