

NUSAC Club Safety Policy (‘Code of Practice’)

Note: This is a revised version of the document first written by Graham Casey. It was updated by Al Wallace to include any references of the Club Diver Qualification and subsequently revised and updated by Chris King in February 2004. The document has been further revised in Summer 2006 after a general review.

1 General Safety Statement

The University of Nottingham Sub-Aqua Club (‘NUSAC’) will provide safe sub-aqua training, diving and dive trips for all members of the British Sub-Aqua Club (BS-AC) who choose to join and dive with NUSAC.

There are inherent risks in diving but the club will do all it can to provide safe diving activities. The final decision to dive or not to dive rests with the individual at all times.

All NUSAC divers should be familiar with this the content of this policy and should comply with it at all times as far as is reasonably practical.

2 General Safety Procedures

NUSAC has a general safety policy of following the BS-AC rules, regulations and recommendations regarding training, diving and use of equipment. These can be found in a number of BS-AC publications, the most relevant of which are:

- Branch Officers’ Handbook
- Sport Diving
- Seamanship for Divers
- Safety and Rescue for Divers
- Teaching Scuba Diving
- Advanced Sport Diving
- Safe Diving Practices
- Instructor Handbook

This document details NUSAC’s general safety policies and procedures, most of which are based on information from the above references.

BS-AC guidelines are used as a minimum standard. Where NUSAC deviates from BS-AC guidelines this is to take account of conditions specific to the NUSAC diving environment.

3 Membership and Diving

- 3.1 All divers participating in club activities, either training (theory, pool, open water or other) or recreational diving must be BS-AC members. They may be members of Nottingham University branch or of another BS-AC branch. They may obtain BS-AC membership either through NUSAC, another BS-AC branch or directly from BASC.

- 3.2 All members of Nottingham University branch must also be members of NUSAC according to BS-AC rules. In fact we require that **all** participants are members of NUSAC even if they do not belong to our branch of BS-AC. (Note that BS-AC and NUSAC memberships must be renewed annually).
- 3.3 Anyone diving or training with NUSAC must have the specific approval of their branch Diving Officer (D.O.) and the NUSAC D.O. (if they are a member of Nottingham University Branch this is of course the same person) for that specific activity.
- 3.4 Similarly any member of Nottingham University branch who wishes to dive or train with another BS-AC club must have the permission of both the NUSAC D.O. and the D.O. of the branch they are diving/training with.
- 3.5 If a NUSAC member dives on a non-NUSAC dive e.g. with a commercial diving operation or on their own (see 3.6 and 3.7) – then NUSAC will not be responsible for those dives.
- 3.6 If a dive is not authorised by the NUSAC Diving Officer then the dive is not a NUSAC dive (see 3.3)
- 3.7 If NUSAC equipment is used the dive becomes a NUSAC dive, with the caveat that this policy then applies to the diving concerned.
- 3.8 Practical club activities (diving and practical training) must only be undertaken by people who hold a current and valid UKSDMC¹ medical form. Note: this means that pool training should not commence until a medical form has been completed and approved.

4 Qualifications

- 4.1 Unlike in the past, divers do not have to be a qualified BS-AC diver or a BS-AC trainee. In line with BS-AC practice the club allows divers qualified by other agencies (e.g. PADI) to dive with us so long as they join NUSAC and BS-AC and do a UKSDMC medical before diving, as described in Section 3.
- 4.2 All qualifications must be verified by the NUSAC D.O.
- 4.3 On joining NUSAC, all active members must provide the D.O. with photocopies of
- Proof of current BS-AC membership
 - Current and valid medical form
 - All qualification(s) (diver grades, instructor grades and Skill Development Course certificates)
 - Qualification book 'Personal Details' page (except for non-BS-AC qualified divers where no such page exists)

When any of these expire and are renewed (e.g. medical form and BS-AC

¹

membership) the member should provide the D.O. with updated photocopies. Whenever another qualification is gained a photocopy should be given to the D.O.

- 4.4 A next-of-kin name and contact number should be provided on joining NUSAC and updated whenever necessary.
- 4.5 The D.O. should only authorise club activities or nominate duties to members on a club dive/trip when his records indicate that the member can do so. Note that even pool training should not commence for a particular member until the D.O.'s records show that the member is a current BS-AC member with a valid medical certificate.
- 4.6 The only person in NUSAC allowed to award qualifications is the NUSAC D.O.
- 4.7 People taking part in a try-dive do *not* need to follow rules 3.1, 3.2, 3.8 and 4.5 so long as they complete and sign a BS-AC try-dive declaration form. NUSAC is still covered by BS-AC insurance in this situation.
- 4.8 Qualification books are to be issued at the start of training. The Personal Details page should be completed (including passport photo) and stamped by the D.O. before any training is signed up.

5 Club Equipment

- 5.1 NUSAC equipment is the responsibility of the Equipment Officer. The boats are the responsibility of the Boat Officer who is answerable to the Committee (see Section 6).
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of any NUSAC member to make sure they inform the Equipment Officer if a piece of equipment is found to be faulty.
- 5.3 Any equipment not suitable for use will be clearly labeled with an approved label.
- 5.4 All members taking equipment must read the Notice board at the entrance to the kit room and log out the equipment taken. It is the responsibility of the individual borrowing the equipment to ensure that it is properly looked after for the duration of the loan.
- 5.5 Access to the kit room is generally restricted to the President, Equipment Officer, Diving Officer and Training Officer. Other people may be allowed access to the equipment room but may only take kit with the permission of the D.O. (see 3.7) and the Equipment Officer.
- 5.6 Only qualified divers who are BS-AC and NUSAC members and have their activity authorised by the D.O. may borrow kit. Trainees may only borrow equipment if under supervision of an appropriately qualified instructor
- 5.7 Any member using NUSAC equipment will be subject to the rules in this policy and to BS-AC rules, regulations and recommendations.

- 5.8 All NUSAC equipment is to be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- 5.9 Service and maintenance records are to be kept for the following equipment: compressors, regulators, tanks and oxygen kits.
- 5.10 Oxygen equipment is to be taken on all NUSAC dives except where the dive centre / boat operator provides oxygen equipment for our use. Note that we should always take our own equipment to Stoney Cove as their rescue services are only there as a backup to our own (see Stoney Cove documentation).
- 5.11 NUSAC oxygen equipment is to be serviced and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's / supplier's instructions.
- 5.12 Two oxygen cylinders are to be kept full at all times.
- 5.13 A qualified Oxygen Administrator must be available at all times on any club trip – see 9.4. This is the responsibility of the Dive Marshal (D.M.).
- 5.14 A first aid kit is to be maintained by the Equipment Officer and taken on all club trips (except where the only diving being undertaken is from club boats, when the boats' own first aid kits will suffice – see 6.9). A list of the contents and a guide to first aid to be kept with all kits (this applies to the boat kits as well). On trips it is the responsibility of the Dive Marshal to note all incidents and any items used and report them to the Union Safety Officer. The Union Safety Officer will provide replacements for used items.
- 5.15 All club regulators are to be fitted with an 'octopus' demand valve.

6 Club Boats

- 6.1 The NUSAC boats are the responsibility of the Boat Officer. The Boat Officer is answerable to the NUSAC Committee.
- 6.2 Access to the boats is restricted to the D.O., Equipment Officer, Boat Officer, President and Advanced Instructors.
- 6.3 The boats may only be used at the D.O.'s discretion.
- 6.4 Trailers are to be maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- 6.5 Each boat is to be equipped with its own VHF radio (either fixed or portable), if required (see 11.8).
- 6.6 The radio, and GPS where fitted, are to be checked before going to sea.
- 6.7 A single GPS must not be used as the sole navigation aid.
- 6.8 On any given club boat dive the boat handler is appointed by the Dive Marshal.

The boats are to be driven by a **qualified** Boat Handler (BS-AC, RYA or similar) or under the direct supervision of a qualified Boat Handler.

- 6.9 Each boat is to be equipped with a full set of emergency equipment (this includes tools, spare parts, flares, first aid kit, torch, etc. – see Seamanship for Divers). This is to be checked by the boat handler against a checklist before going to sea.
- 6.10 Laminated guides to using the VHF radio, GPS, engines, flares and other emergency equipment are to be kept on board at all times and their location told to each person on board before going to sea.
- 6.11 Use of the VHF is to be demonstrated to everyone on board before going to sea.
- 6.12 Engines are to be maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- 6.13 The boats are to be maintained in a seaworthy condition and the Boat Officer should check the boats (including emergency equipment), trailers and engines before any trip.

7 Personal Equipment

- 7.1 Personal equipment is the sole responsibility of the owner.
- 7.2 People using personal equipment must be qualified and competent in the use of their equipment for a given dive.
- 7.3 Equipment owners must be aware of the effect on the other NUSAC members of any personal diving equipment failures due to poor maintenance or incorrect use.
- 7.4 Personal equipment may be stored in the NUSAC equipment room at the discretion of the Equipment Officer, and must be clearly labeled. This equipment is not to be used as club equipment.
- 7.5 Divers will be encouraged to buy their own equipment to increase their safety due to familiarity with diving equipment.
- 7.6 Personal equipment used on club dives must be maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The responsibility is on the owner.
- 7.7 All personal regulators used on club dives should provide a suitable Alternate Air Source (e.g. an octopus or a second demand valve).

8 Training

- 8.1 The D.O. is responsible for training though training can be administered by other committee members and instructors.
- 8.2 Any changes to the BS-AC training rules and regulations or the BS-AC Diver

Training Program are conveyed to the D.O. by BS-AC. Any such information is to be passed on to the people administering training by the D.O.

- 8.3 Theory lessons (as defined by the BSAS curriculum) are to be administered by an appointed member of the committee and given by BCAC appropriately qualified instructors (see current BS-AC recommendations).
- 8.4 Pool training should only be undertaken by people who are suitably qualified or supervised BS-AC and NUSAC members who hold a current, valid medical certificate.
- 8.5 Pool training is administered by the Training Officer and approved by the D.O. Training is given by appropriately-qualified instructors (see current BS-AC recommendations).
- 8.6 Open Water Training is subject to the rules of any other open water dive and is only to be given by appropriately-qualified instructors (see current BS-AC recommendations).

9 Safety and Rescue Skills

- 9.1 NUSAC will encourage as many members as possible to undertake any training which will improve the overall safety of the club. This will be achieved by running skill development courses such as *Oxygen Administration* and *Practical Rescue Management* in-house as often as is feasible and by encouraging members to go along to regional and national Skill Development Courses.
- 9.2 NUSAC will encourage its members, where feasible, to work towards a minimum of Sports Diver (by portraying Ocean Diver and Club Diver as stepping-stones rather than ultimate goals).
- 9.3 Similarly we will encourage people who are interested to work towards higher diver grades and towards instructor grades. Since we have a large number of trainees each year we should encourage as many people to aim for Dive Leader and Advanced Diver as possible. We will actively encourage suitable candidates to attend Instructor Foundation Courses.
- 9.4 All members should be encouraged to attend an Oxygen Administration course (which we can now run in-house).
- 9.5 All qualified Boat Handlers will be encouraged to attend a VHF radio course if they haven't already.
- 9.6 All qualified and suitably experienced Boat Handlers will be encouraged to take the BS-AC Diver Cox'n assessment.
- 9.7 Minibus safety – see the Union Safety Officer for up-to-date legislation and guidelines.
- 9.8 First Aid: All members will be encouraged to attend a first aid course. A first-aider should be available at the dive site. On a dive trip the ratio of one first-aider to

twelve divers should be aimed at. It is important to note that ALL members should have a basic knowledge of basic life saving skills such as AV, the exception being new trainees and Ocean Divers who should be taught them as soon as possible..

10 Dive Planning

- 10.1 There should be at least one Advanced Diver on each trip. If this is not possible, a suitably experienced Dive Leader, approved by the D.O. should be present. There must be suitable cover in the areas of Oxygen Administration / Rescue Management / Dive Planning and Marshalling.
- 10.2 All trips must be approved by the D.O.
- 10.3 All divers must be approved by the D.O.
- 10.4 A Trip Form and Trip Participants List is to be submitted to the Union Safety Officer before each trip.
- 10.5 A full risk assessment, dive plan, buddy check and SEEDS briefing should be conducted before each dive.
- 10.6 All divers must plan their dives within the limits of their experience. The qualification must have been approved by the D.O.

11 Dive Marshalling

- 11.1 Suitable D.M.s must be approved by the D.O. before each trip. A D.M. is required for each sequence of dives. Under certain circumstances (for example when the D.M. is also diving, an Assistant D.M. will be required).
- 11.2 The D.M. is answerable to the D.O. Assistant D.M.s are answerable to the D.M.
- 11.3 The D.M. and/or the Assistant D.M. should be an Advanced Diver. If this is not possible a Dive Leader can act as a D.M. at the discretion of the D.O.
- 11.4 At least one of the D.M. / assistant D.M. should ideally be an Advanced Diver but due to the nature of the membership of this club a minimum of Dive Leader will suffice, so long as an Advanced Diver approves the D.M.'s plans and is present for the rest of the day's diving-related activities (to ensure safety and take control in the event of an emergency)
- 11.5 The D.M. must give a full briefing before any series of dives.
- 11.6 BS-AC guidelines on Dive Marshalling are vast and will not be regurgitated here, but they should be adhered to at all times. See BS-AC documentation for more information.
- 11.7 Dive Marshalling sheets / slates should be used for all club diving and records passed to the D.O. after the trip.

- 11.8 Depth limits, maximum dive times, equipment level requirements, air reserves (min. 50 bar) and suitable buddy pairs to be set by the D.M. and explained in the dive briefing.
- 11.9 For “Faff” (our RIB²) to be used alone, the radio, sounder and GPS should be fully operational and a backup radio should be available. Whenever possible, two or more boats should be used to provide additional safety. “Brian” and “Naughty Boy” (our inflatables) may be used either together or with Faff. When used without Faff, each boat should carry its own portable VHF. The boats should operate within sight of each other and the prevailing weather conditions should be suitable for the least capable boat.
- 11.10 All incidents, whether or not it caused a change of plan, are to be noted on the marshalling slate / sheet and reported to the D.O., the Union Safety Officer and BS-AC as applicable.
- 11.11 The D.M. and Assistant D.M. should not dive at the same time. If two boats are used they should be in separate boats. The D.M should always dive in the second wave.
- 11.12 Ideally standby divers / snorkellers should be available in case of problems, but this may not be possible if all divers on the surface have already dived..

12 Assistant Diving Officers

The D.O. may not be available at all times. To overcome this problem, the D.O. may delegate his duties to another NUSAC member. The Assistant D.O. must be suitably qualified and experienced. This will only occur in exceptional circumstances and all points in this document will be adhered to.

13 Stoney Cove

It is only a BS-AC recommendation that an Advanced Diver is present on all dive trips. The main function of the Advanced Diver is Oxygen Administration / Rescue Management / Dive Planning and Marshalling as required by the qualification itself. Due to Stoney Cove’s excellent rescue facilities it is not necessary to have an Advanced Diver present. However all the other notes still stand. Particularly in with respect to logging of dives. All trips must be logged, this has been done in the case of Stoney Cove as a block booking, however a trip participants form must still be submitted and the diving pairs must comply with BS-AC and NUSAC regulations. All dives at Stoney Cove, as for all dives, must be approved by the D.O.

14 Mixed Gas Diving

- **Nitrox:**

Nitrox use is allowed on any club dive so long as the diver using it is suitably qualified (BS-AC, IANTD, TDI nitrox courses etc.). The individual using Nitrox must inform the

² Rigid-hulled Inflatable Boat

D.M. prior to the dive. In the event of an emergency it is safe for a non-qualified diver to breathe such a mix, as long as it is not for the duration of the dive. Oxygen rich mixes may also be used in the place of oxygen for treating diving related incidents if oxygen in its pure form is not available by reason of having run out in the treatment of the incident. Nitrox divers must check the Maximum Operating Depth (MOD) of their mix before diving, and dive well within this depth.

- **Tri-mix and Re-breathers**

Open circuit Tri-mix (or any other 'exotic' mix) and closed or semi-closed circuit re-breathers are only permitted to be used on club dives by suitably qualified / experienced divers. BS-AC guidelines must be followed at all times The use of the equipment and buddy pairings must have the approval of the D.M.