



# BRITISH DRAGON BOAT RACING ASSOCIATION



## REGISTERED CENTRES, ACCREDITED ORGANISATIONS and Dragon Boat Clubs

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE** FOR THE **CONDUCT OF DRAGON BOATING**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

These Terms of Reference have been primarily prepared for those providers of Dragon Boating who wish to apply to become a Registered Dragon Boat Centre of the British Dragon Boat Racing Association (BDA) or an Accredited Dragon Boat Organisation

Particular emphasis has been placed on the facilities, equipment, water conditions and the minimum training and safety standards that the BDA recommends to those applicants who provide Dragon Boating for young people in a non-competitive environment.

The Terms of Reference apply equally to non accredited Dragon Boat Clubs offering 'Come and Try It' sessions to the general public and when introducing novices to the sport of Dragon Boat Racing.

Whilst not written specifically for training situations, the safety guidelines within these Terms of Reference should be taken into account when a Dragon Boat crew is in a training environment, especially in Winter conditions.

There is obviously a very different level of risk involved when crews are practising on the sea, where the BDA Instructor is the more appropriate supervisory level than that concerned with the first introductory lesson on very sheltered inland water, where the requirement for the person in charge is set at Club Helm level.

In the guidelines the BDA is seeking to set out examples of good practice, related to an appreciation of the actual level of risk in each of the situations identified. It is emphasised that the requirements shown are the minimum expected by the BDA from a Centre, Organisation or Club offering dragon boating as an activity.

#### **ASSUMPTIONS**

It is assumed throughout these Terms of Reference that Centres, Organisations and Clubs operate a training regime for every person involved, relevant to the locations in use, which will ensure that everyone concerned has adequate personal competence, is equipped and practised in the use of all necessary equipment, and is aware of all the potential hazards of the environment in question.

It is also assumed that equipment will be maintained to an acceptable standard, and that students will be trained in its application and use.

## **TYPES OF CENTRE, ORGANISATION OR CLUB**

Such operational delivery of Dragon Boating will be dependant upon the emphasis of the particular Centre, Organisation or Dragon Boat Club. In this context, they are generally perceived to work in five main ways.

1. **Activity Holiday Companies** - typically providing one-off introductory sessions on very sheltered water.
2. **Education Authority Centres** - the emphasis (but not the entire end purpose) being on the Dragon Boat as a vehicle for achieving educational, and personal development and team building skills.
3. **Outdoor Activity Centres** - the emphasis (but not the entire end purpose) being on the introduction of candidates to the skills, techniques and understanding of the sport and its practice, to lead them into competent recreational participants.
4. **Recreational Activity/Leisure Event Companies** - generally Private Companies organising competitive and recreational Dragon Boat activities on a commercial basis.
5. **Dragon Boat Clubs** - the emphasis (but not the entire end purpose) being to introduce novices to the skills and techniques needed to become part of a competitive Dragon Boat crew and to develop the experience and understanding of the sport needed to enter the BDA Coaching Scheme.

## **BDA POLICY**

The BDA assumes the integrity of the management and those performing in the field, and wishes to offer its support to Centres, Organisations and Clubs which operate within accepted good practice. Any reading of these guidelines with a view to seeking 'loopholes' or to establish 'the minimum we can get away with' is out of keeping with the spirit in which they are presented.

### **Swimming Ability and Buoyancy Aids**

All participants under the age of 18 undertaking activities outside of a competitive event run under BDA Rules and Regulations must wear a Buoyancy Aid or Life Jacket, the fitting of which should be checked by a suitably qualified leader, who has given instruction on its application and use.

Normally participants in Dragon Boat activities should be able to swim 50 metres in light clothing.. Some non-swimmers may in fact, be safely introduced to Dragon Boating by trained instructors, in a controlled environment, as a means of instilling water confidence. Such discretion may be exercised in line with the instructor's training and experience, where such special circumstances exist.

### **The BDA recommendation with regard to personal buoyancy is:**

It is recommended that Buoyancy Aids to ACT Standard BA 83 or CEN 50N Standard be worn by novices under the age of 16. Other types of Buoyancy Aids may be worn by those over 16, such as Buoyancy Aids to BPIF Standards. Some Life Jackets to BS 3595 or CEN Standards are also suitable alternatives and should always be worn by weak or non-swimmers in sea conditions.

Where race training is being undertaken, in summer conditions, Buoyancy Aids may be disposed with at the discretion of the Boat Captain (normally the Helm).

(Boat Captain or Leader or 'coach' in this Leaflet refers equally to a BDA Qualified Helms (Basic & Advanced) BDA Centre Coaches, BDA Coach Levels 1-4).

### **General Requirements - Non Competitive Situations**

Centres, Organisations or Clubs must hold adequate Public and Employers' Liability Insurance and a Safety Policy Statement must be in force.

A satisfactory Operational Plan must be in place, together with an Emergency Action Plan. The BDA Safety on Water Poster should be clearly displayed.

The Centre, Organisation or Club must ensure that there is adequate First Aid provision available at all times, both on and off the water.

**Staffing.** The Centre, Organisation or Club must employ or appoint a BDA Coach Level 2 (Centre Coach) who is currently a member of the BDA, as the member of staff with total responsibility for all Dragon Boat activities, including the choosing of venues and their suitability, and for informing Centre/Club Management Staff of the chosen location(s).

Under the authorisation of a BDA Centre Coach or Coach Level 2, training sessions may be taken by Leaders below the level of BDA Coach Level 2 (Centre Coach) but only in placid conditions and with a risk assessment as outlined below. In addition when competitive Dragon Boat Racing is being organised, by a Centre, Organisation or Club, such racing must be under the control of qualified BDA Race Officials and organised by a BDA Licensed Race Organiser.

**Risk Assessment Considerations.** Participants: Buoyancy Aids or Life Jackets when worn must be correctly fitted and must be checked by the Instructor before going afloat.

Clothing: Must be appropriate, taking into account the factors below. Suitable foot protection must be worn to prevent cuts due to ground or water hazards such as glass, shells or flints or due to contact hazards in the boat.

Factors: Water temperature, Air temperature, Wind Chill factor,  
the ability of the group, the type of activity,  
the length of the session and the location  
the type and size of the water course  
available support services – e.g. rescue craft

## DEFINITIONS FOR INLAND DRAGON BOATING.

### Very Sheltered Water

The definition involves:

Quiet canals with easy bank access and egress. Park lakes, which are not large enough, and do not have difficult landing areas, for problems to occur if there is a sudden change in conditions. Enclosed Docks and Water Sports Centres. Specified sites on slow moving rivers.

The definition implies summer weather conditions which are not in themselves likely to cause problems. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low or wind strengths cause adverse wave conditions, as can be expected in winter conditions.

**Very Sheltered Waters** are suitable for BDA Basic Helms and Advanced Helms or a Coach Level 1, to control crews, in normal summer weather conditions without being under the direct physical supervision of a Coach Level 2 (Centre Coach) or above. In winter conditions as a minimum, a Coach Level 2 must be present.

### Sheltered Water

The definition involves:

Small Lakes and Reservoirs, placid water rivers, faster flowing rivers but not involving the shooting of Weirs or running rapids.

The definition implies normal summer weather conditions. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low or when operating more than 50 metres from a shore or landing point.

**Sheltered Water** in summer conditions, is suitable for BDA Basic or Advanced Helm to supervise groups under the authorisation of the BDA Coach Level 2 (Centre Coach). In winter conditions a BDA Coach Level 2 (Centre Coach) must take direct control of all Dragon Boating activities on sheltered water.

**Other requirement:** For journeys an Instructor must always be in charge.

### Open Water

The definition involves:

Large and Very large Inland lakes and Reservoirs; tidal estuaries and open harbours but not the Sea. The Sea is a very different environment from inland waters.

**Requirements for very large Lakes.** Dragon Boats must be fitted with additional buoyancy and crew members must wear Buoyancy Aids. In addition the Instructor must carry a throw line and there should be at least two spare Paddles in the boat. Novice Crews on very large lakes and reservoirs and on tidal estuaries must be accompanied by an Instructor in the Dragon Boat or in an accompanying boat.

**Staff Ratios** (For Coach Level 2, also read Centre Coach)

The following Staff Ratios are suggested as ideal for practical teaching purposes. BDA Coach Level 2 and above are, however, trained to recognise when circumstances allow these guidelines to be safely exceeded, or when lower limits should be applied. The person in charge should always be allowed to exercise discretion.

<b>Very Sheltered Water</b>	One BDA Helm per boat. (summer) One Coach Level 2 supervising (winter)
<b>Sheltered Water</b>	One BDA Helm per boat. (summer) One Coach Level 2 per boat (winter)
<b>Open Water</b>	One BDA Helm and one Coach Level 2 per boat plus 1 -3 competent paddlers in support (all conditions).

### **GUIDELINES FOR DRAGON BOATING IN SHELTERED TIDAL WATERS**

The sea is a very different environment from inland waters. It can easily ensnare the unwary, the uninitiated, or the careless, with its sometimes apparently tranquil appearance. It can change, often gradually and imperceptibly, at other times dramatically and suddenly.

This Section concerns introductory sessions to Dragon Boating, training for racing and Fun type races on sheltered tidal waters.

**It is not applicable to open sea conditions or for Open Sea Journeys. The BDA does not encourage the use of Dragon Boats for Open Sea Journeys**

#### **Sheltered Tidal Waters**

The definition involves:

Small enclosed bays when there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore.  
Enclosed Harbours where there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore.  
The upper reaches of some estuaries.

In all cases the wind and weather conditions must be favourable. If any doubts exist about the suitability of a venue, the BDA Regional Coaching Organiser for the area, should be consulted.

**Sheltered Tidal Water** areas are suitable for BDA Coach Level 2 to supervise groups or for BDA Qualified Helms to supervise groups when authorised by an Coach Level.2

## **Staffing.**

Centres, Organisations and Clubs must employ or appoint a BDA Coach Level 2 (Centre Coach) who has experience of the sea, as the member of staff responsible for choosing venues and their suitability for sea Dragon Boat activities, and to inform Centre/Club Management of the chosen location(s).

**Staff Competence.** It is recognised that as BDA qualified Helms and Coach Level 1 holders progress through the BDA Coaching Awards Scheme towards Coach Level 2, they will develop skills, knowledge, and experience that will increasingly equip them for taking greater responsibility for crews on the water. However, If the experience of a Basic or Advanced Helm or Coach Level 1, is not appropriate for supervising novice crews on sheltered tidal waters or if the prevailing weather conditions dictate, a BDA Coach Level 2 must be on the water in charge of the crew

It would NOT be outside the spirit of these guidelines for the person in charge of Dragon Boat activities at a Centre, Organisation or Club to use a BDA Basic Helm in suitable sea situations providing all factors are taken into consideration, such as the nature of the location, the prevailing weather conditions, experience and ability of the group, experience and ability of the Helm and a considered evaluation of the risk.

**This must be understood to be an operational judgement which can only be made on the day, by an experienced and qualified member of staff. (The minimum recommended is BDA Coach Level 2). The terms of reference for these decisions should be clearly registered in the Centres, Organisations or Clubs normal operating procedures. Details should always be recorded in the Activity Log.**

**Staff Ratio.** A staff ratio of One BDA Helm per boat for general activities close in-shore, with one BDA Coach Level 2 supervising from the shore, is suggested as practical for teaching purposes in Sheltered Tidal Waters. BDA Coaches are, how-ever, trained to recognise when circumstances allow these guidelines to be safely relaxed, or when higher staffing ratios should be applied. The person in charge should always be allowed to exercise discretion

## **Use of Rescue/Support Boats**

The use of Support Boats is recommended for novice and junior crews but in calm and stable conditions an experienced crew may, with the authorisation of at least a BDA Coach Level 2, dispense with a Support Boat. In such cases PFDs should be worn by all crew members, irrespective of their experience or personal fitness and swimming abilities. Tow lines must be carried by all boats and a First Aid Kit and Emergency Equipment must be available close at hand when operating away from the environs of the Centre, Organisation or Club.

**HM Coastguard** There is no need to inform HM Coastguard of 'static' activities, such as introductory sessions, basic skills work, and similar close inshore activities. **It is advisable to let the Coastguard know if you are going to carry out a number of capsiz and rescue practices, particularly where a member of the public could become concerned.** Centre, Organisations and Clubs must conform with the HM Coastguard 'Code of Safe Practice' when and where this is appropriate to the type of Dragon Boating being undertaken.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR BOATS AND EQUIPMENT

### The Boat

All boats should be clearly marked with the Telephone Number and ideally the name of the Operator so that in the event of a boat being found adrift, the owner can be easily contacted and any need for Search and Rescue, in an open water situation, rapidly established.

Boats should ideally, carry a IDBF Boat Manufacturers Licence which indicates the boat has adequate buoyancy and is constructed to the correct International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF) Specification for a Racing Dragon Boat.

Paddles should also be to IDBF Specification.

### Equipment

**Dragon Boats operating in open water** must carry towlines and a 20m throw-line. The Helm must carry an audible alarm signal - whistle or Air Horn - for the attention of the Support Boat or others.

**Support Boats** must carry a First Aid Kit and Survival Bags and alternative means of propulsion. Anchor and Spare Rope, Bucket and Bailers and Tool Kit including spare Boat Bolts, Spanners etc.

## GENERAL CONDITIONS FOR DRAGON BOATING

Both air and water temperatures should be considered. Sea temperatures are normally low in the United Kingdom, especially between November and May.

Crews should be briefed that, in the event of a capsize, the crew will operate the 'buddy buddy' system, detailed in the BDA Guide to Safety on the Water Leaflet. They should be informed of their responsibility towards each other.

A single signalling system should be established with the Support Boat or land base, particularly to indicate if help is required, and when to come immediately to shore.

**An Instructor, capable of competently operating the Rescue/Support Craft, should be delegated as a spotter to ensure that all the party is safe, or if the boat is crossing a large expanse of open water (a very large lake) then, the Rescue Craft should accompany the Dragon Boat.**

*The BDA acknowledges the assistance of the British Canoe Union (BCU) in compiling these Terms of Reference which are based on those applied to the BCU Centre Approval Scheme*