

Guidance Notes for:

Writing Training Centre Operating Procedures as part of your Safety Management System

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RYA Training Centre Paperwork

RYA Recognised Training Centres (RTCs) are required to operate in accordance with the RYA Guidance Notes for training centres.

The RTCs documentation should record what happens in practise. While it is important to record centre procedures, the emphasis is on establishing and documenting a practical and workable framework under which instructors and students can operate, keeping them as safe as possible. It is not about creating an unworkable and useless mountain of paperwork that nobody can understand.

The Guidance Notes require RTCs to support their operation with the necessary paperwork. The documentation needed for the safe management of risk should be kept in one location and easily accessible. These documents will include:

1. Health and Safety policy
2. Standard Operating Procedures (including course programmes)
3. Risk Assessments
4. Emergency Action Plan
5. Child Protection Policy
6. Staff qualifications

Appendices are a good idea to add reference documentation such as: daily check sheets, instructor briefing notes, maps/charts of operating areas, copies of your booking and course feedback forms.

Further information and documents for writing your Major Incident Procedures and Child Protection Policies are available on the [RYA website](#).

Introduction

The following is a guide to help you compile your operating procedures, it should not be seen as the 'only' approach or for inspectors to check against. It has been developed purely as an aid.

Further support is available from RYA Training, your Regional Development Officer (RDO) and the inspector carrying out your annual inspection.

Writing your operating procedures

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) form a very important part of your training centre's supporting documentation. They should map out the key elements of operation at your centre. Think of them as a 'user guide' for instructors and personnel, covering information that is required for someone to run a course/session at your centre. They should not contain so much detail that the content is easily forgotten or ties your staff/volunteers to actions that may not always be relevant.

The outcomes from writing your risk assessments should play an important part of the formulation of your SOPs. These original assessments should be easily accessible for cross referencing and updating.

They should contain the **minimum necessary information** required to ensure the document is not excessive, with a continual reviewing system in place to ensure your safety management document is a 'live' document, evolving and taking into account items such as 'lessons learned' from accidents and near misses.

The Principal of the RTC or club should take ultimate responsibility for the document, but may choose to delegate sections to people such as the chief instructors, who will be seen as the discipline experts.

Keep the SOPs as simple as possible, the bulk of information remaining generic with references to specific disciplines or courses where appropriate. If necessary, add further discipline specific sections to avoid instructors learning unnecessary information.

Finally, introducing a signing sheet will ensure your staff have read and understood the document. This should be repeated each season/annually or on revision, ensuring your staff are up to date with any changes or amendments to the training centre's operation.

Part 1) An Overview

Start by giving an overview of your training centre. What are the centre's aims and objectives, who are the people receiving the tuition and when/where does it operate?

Part 2) Structure and Content

Here are some key areas to include:

- **Roles and Responsibilities:**

- Responsibilities of the Principal and qualified instructors are laid down in the Guidance Notes. 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 centre's staffing structure.
- Who is the management? – is it a local authority, club or private enterprise and what is the reporting/management structure?

- Overall and final responsibility must rest with the owner of the centre.
 - A deputy, to act on the Principal's behalf if he is absent from the centre, should be nominated.
 - Supervisors may also be nominated for specific areas of responsibility, eg: a nominated RYA Yachtmaster™ instructor for cruising courses, a senior instructor for dinghy, keelboat and windsurfing courses etc. Those with specific responsibilities should also be nominated, eg: carrying out safety inspections, investigating accidents and monitoring maintenance of boats.
 - It should be stressed that all staff and instructors have a responsibility to co-operate with supervisors and managers to achieve a safe teaching environment.
- **Staffing:**
 - The day to day staffing of sessions/courses.
 - What are the teaching ratios, arrangements in place for staff briefings, instructor arrival times and content of the daily briefing? What are the appropriate qualification levels for instructors working on each course? eg: a senior instructor must lead 'day sailing' courses.
 - 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 RYA file and records of any references/self-disclosure/CRB forms kept onsite in a suitable secure location. Records of staff qualifications and certificates must be held in the RYA files.
- **Students:**
 - This should include important information relating to students, 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, feedback form etc.
 - Booking forms are to be completed prior to the course, under 18s to be completed by a parent/guardian, emergency contact and medical information and briefings to be provided. Any requirements such as appropriate clothing to be worn should be included in the joining instructions or information sent to candidates prior to the course.
- **Safety:**
 - Safety at an RTC 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, eg: in a powerboat risk assessment, a risk of '**Man Overboard**' might be identified. One of the control measures might be to '**brief the students to hold on centrally at all times**'. Another might be '**Recovering people from the water**' control measure '**always switch the engine off when in close proximity to someone in the water etc**'.

Risk Assessments should be located in your RTC file and referred to in the SOPs.

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 RYA file, with an additional copy on display in the centre and on board each of the safety boats. The Emergency Action Plan should also include a communications list with a flow chart and all relevant contact numbers that will be required in the event of an incident. For all serious incidents it is essential that the RYA is notified as soon as possible.
- 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 area: this area may change on a daily basis, but you will have a normal operating area, eg: the area you usually use for the majority of courses.
- This section should include any additional operating areas and those outside your normal operating areas, such as: day sailing venues, intermediate/advanced 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 students, environment, conditions and other water users.

- **Courses/Training:**

- RYA recognition determines which courses 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 information, common practise, eg: '**All courses are run by appropriately qualified instructors**'.
 - You may wish to add any centre specific information rather than required practise.

- Activities being run outside RYA courses should also be included in this section.
- Guidance is given in the Instructor Handbook.

- **Boats and Equipment:**

- All boats/equipment must comply with the guidelines set out in the Guidance Notes 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 SOP appendices:
 - All craft are checked by instructors prior to going afloat.
 - All craft must carry the necessary equipment as per Guidance Notes (A list of the equipment your boats carry should be held in the appendix).
 - All powerboats have their killcords checked prior to and during sessions.
 - All dinghies use masthead floats on beginner courses.
 - Maintenance: maintenance log must be completed at the end of each session and reported to the boatswain.

Accidents

- Everyone must know where first aid equipment is kept.
- There should be a list of trained first aiders available.
- Someone should be nominated to check and replenish first aid boxes.
- There should be a procedure, understood by all staff and instructors, for reporting and recording accidents (Accident Book).
- There should be a routine established for contacting next of kin in the event of a serious accident.

Accident Reporting

All centres should use an accident book to record any incidents requiring first aid treatment.

UK centres may be required by law to report certain accidents or illnesses to the HSE Incident Contact Centre. Full details can be found on the [HSE website](#). Overseas centres may have a similar national requirement.

Part 3) 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 and feedback 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 SOPs, 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.
- Your operating procedures are a very important aspect of your training centre's set-up and if written well they will act as a guide to best practise and will ensure that staff are up to speed with the key elements of operation.
- Remember to include all the necessary information to demonstrate that your training centre is well managed and conforms to the guidelines, and include any relevant information regarding training other than RYA training to ensure that you have procedures in place.

Resources

Here are some other resources available to you via the [RYA website](#):

- **RYA Guidance Notes**
- **Guidance for Major Incident Planning**
- **RYA Child protection policy**