
RISK-BENEFIT PHILOSOPHY

Revised Mar 2019

The Aqua Sports Company has operated on Mercer's lake since 1993 and provided outdoor and watersports activities for both adults and children in this time. We have found that there are many advantages gained through participating in these activities, and identify the key benefits as:

- i. The partaking in a physical activity, essential to gaining and maintaining a fit and healthy lifestyle.
- ii. The acquisition of a physical skill, which is conducive to the developing growth of a mental dexterity and physical capability that can reflect into other areas of participants lives, two main areas being: greater self-esteem and a greater enjoyment of life, summarised as an increased ability to engage beneficially within society and all aspects of their worlds.
- iii. The chance to get outdoors and to interact with the environment, encompassing a multitude of benefits centred around:
 - o an improved appreciation, knowledge and awareness of the environment,
 - o a broader life and skill experience, and
 - o escaping from the stresses of daily life with its associated health risks.
- iv. The opportunity to interact with and meet a diverse range of people (or people they would never have met otherwise) and the implicit social benefits that stem from diversity and social interaction.
- v. The possibility to exercise and improve on a number of soft skills such as, but not limited to:
 - o communication,
 - o teamwork and collaboration,
 - o discipline and commitment,
 - o decision-making, and
 - o problem-solving.

These soft skills are positively correlated to an increased emotional intelligence that will help them succeed in all aspects of life.

- vi. Involvement in activities where a wide range of learning styles and personality traits can flourish, complimenting a society which is increasingly recognising
 - a. the benefits of a skill set outside of academia (for example, BTECs and apprenticeships).
 - b. the multitude and importance of the varied learning styles of individuals.

This is inclusive of giving both children and adults who may not enjoy, or feel able to participate in other sports an avenue to discover an activity that they can make their own.

As with any and all adventure activities there are associated risks with the activities we run that might cause loss or harm involving participants, staff (as paid and employed by the centre), volunteers, visitors to the centre, or members of the general public in proximity to the water and/or centre. There should be recognition that it would not be possible to completely remove all and every element of risk in any adventure activity.

The benefits above inform our risk management policy and make the associated risks acceptable so long as they are suitably managed. Suitably being defined as:

- a full awareness of the risks acknowledged and recognised by the centre and centre staff, and an appropriate awareness highlighted to participants;
- steps taken to reduce the chance of risks where appropriate;
- regular assessment of risks to remove, where considered possible and appropriate, any risks that are not inextricably linked to participation so that no unnecessary or additional risks are taken.
- appropriate response procedures for accidents/injuries;

APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF CHALLENGE

Having suitably managed risk against the balance of benefits it needs to be observed that often the benefits are not gained despite the risk, but are derived out of the risk. This means that some benefits require purposefully allowing a certain degree of suitably managed risk. We could define this as “challenge” and is an integral element of adventure activities. Our aim as a centre is to ensure the safe, effective learning and enjoyment of all water users, both participants and staff; and in specific regard to risks, to allow a suitable level of challenge for each person in order to accomplish this aim. Individual capabilities and personalities will influence what each participant might consider challenging and the level of risk a particular activity may hold (see more on dynamic/variable impacts below.)

CORE STRATEGIES OF RISK MANAGEMENT

The key strategies we use to ensure success in achieving this are:

1. Agreed Operating Procedures founded on comprehensive risk assessments, both of which are subjected to regular review by competent members of staff.
2. The employment and assignment of competent staff on all sessions we run with a Senior Team overseeing all centre activities and operations.
3. Induction of staff and ongoing training.
4. Competent monitoring of water sessions and their delivery.
5. Inclusion (to an appropriate level where it is appropriate for their level and ability) within our training of giving participants and staff the ability and knowledge to understand, be aware of, and negotiate the risks within our sports.
6. Awareness of, conversation with and advice from the governing bodies of the relevant activities that we run regarding best practice. Additionally: compliance to the guidelines set out by these governing bodies, which is usually guaranteed and checked via a regular annual or biannual inspection.

Competency, as used above, being defined as an appropriate level of training and/or experience to oversee, assess and manage a certain level of risk management within the operation of the centre, ensured and moderated through:

- holding an appropriate award/qualification or having been judged competent by a technical adviser / head of centre.
- having been inducted into the centre’s procedures.
- having received additional training appropriate to their role, including first aid, manual handling and management of the water environment

DYNAMIC/VARIABLE IMPACTS UPON RISK MANAGEMENT

There are factors that, in certain situations, impact the level of risk our assessment highlights:

- risks will be higher for less qualified individuals, and lower for more qualified persons,
- certain weather conditions will increase risks on the lake, and
- the number of people using the lake will affect ease of risk management.

We respond to these factors by:

- supervision of complete novices and ability-restricted lake usage,
- increased/tightened risk controls in tougher weather conditions, up to a maximum restriction of Lake Closure, and
- instructor ratios.