

BCU Lifeguards: Swim Event Safety Award (SESA)

1. Purpose of Award

The purpose of the award is to provide the candidate with the necessary skills and knowledge to work as part of a water safety team at any water based event where open water swimming is involved.

Whilst this award does not qualify the candidate as a BCU Lifeguard it does provide them with the skills relevant to the open water swimming event environment.

2. Validity

The award is valid for 3 years.

3. Structure

The award is delivered in 2 modules over an 8 hour period. Training can be delivered in one day or spread over a number of weekly sessions. Assessment is on-going throughout.

4. Trainer/Assessor

SESA Trainer/Assessor (TA) can train/assess up to 8 candidates.

5. Pre-Requisites

- Minimum of 14 years of age
- Competent to paddle & control the craft the course is being taken in
- 4hr First aid award
- Be able to swim up to 25m in canoeing clothing

NB – Whilst the minimum age for being awarded SESA is 14 years it should not be assumed that young people holding SESA can automatically provide safety cover at an event. The involvement of young people within any water safety team must be fully support by the event risk assessment ensuring factors including, but not limited to, the nature of the event, weather/water conditions, support, supervision and duration of the event are taken into consideration.

6. Venue

The course should be conducted on placid water, grade 1 rivers, sheltered coastal waters or similar. Whilst modules can also be conducted in swimming pools, it is strongly recommended that at least some of the training takes place in an open water environment.

7. Syllabus

Unit 1: Theory

- a. Introduction
- b. Working within a team (inc positioning, rotating & communication)
- c. Weather and its effects
- d. Personal welfare, equipment & clothing
- e. Dealing with swimmers (what to expect, common minor incidents and how to deal with them)

- f. Signs of swimmers in distress
- g. Actions when dealing with an unconscious swimmer
- h. Working with other elements of the water safety team
- i. Debriefing & emotional support

Unit 2: Practical Skills

- a. Swimming in open water*
- b. Positioning of the craft (inc positioning in relation to swimmers, using the craft to guide swimmers)
- c. Dealing with common issues (cramp, tight wetsuits, breathlessness, injuries including (minor) casualty evac procedures)
- d. Dealing with an unconscious casualty (including unconscious casualty evac procedures)
 - i. Actions from within the craft
 - ii. Entering the water – performing expired air ventilation (EAV)

* It is strongly recommended that candidates complete this section of the award in a suitable wetsuit however; other swimwear may be worn at the trainer's discretion.

8. Assessment

There is no formal assessment. Assessment is on-going throughout the course. Candidates will be deemed as having passed the course providing they show a good level of understanding of the theory elements of the course and perform the practical skills adequately.

Whilst there is no set paddling competency qualification required, candidates will need to demonstrate good boat control throughout the course to be deemed to be able to perform the practical skills correctly.

Course Notes

It is important to note that this award does not qualify candidates as a 'Lifeguard' however it does equip them with the necessary, relevant skills for working as part of the water safety team at open water swim events.

Syllabus

Unit 1: Theory

a. Introduction

The introduction should be kept brief but should outline the precise remit of the award. Candidates should be informed that upon completion of the course they should have obtained sufficient skills and knowledge to be able to work alongside other qualified personnel at events (both Canoe Lifeguards & other organisations) on a professional level.

b. Working within a team

This section should cover elements relating to working within a team. Why paddlers are split into teams, how they are managed (by team leaders/deputies), how team members are positioned and why, how and when teams/team members are rotated and how information is communicated throughout the team. Candidates should discuss different team setups & ways/methods of operating.

c. Weather and its effects

The section should discuss with candidates how weather can affect the team, swimmers, water conditions – including the hazards associated with different types weather and actions that can be taken to limit their impact. This section should not stray too far into the personal welfare section below, but should be focussed more on the effects of the weather on the event, swimmers and operations of the water safety team.

d. Personal welfare, equipment & clothing

This section should discuss issues relating to personal welfare, equipment & clothing. Topics should include (but not limited to): weather conditions (hot & cold & effects of), time on water, concentration span of team members, types of boats and their suitability, personal clothing, equipment/clothing supplied. The point of presenting a professional image at all times should also be discussed.

e. Dealing with swimmers

This section should cover the fundamental elements of dealing with any swimmer (inc how buoyancy is affected by different body mass and swimwear). Discussions should be based around communicating with the swimmer, what common (minor) issues they could suffer from and ways to deal with them. Emphasis should be put on reassurance and being supportive.

f. Signs of swimmers in distress

In this section candidates should discuss what characteristics a swimmer in distress would display (Laying on back, one hand in the air, seeking attention of a paddler, shouting etc). The section should also briefly cover scanning of a swim zone, looking for swimmers in distress and the benefit of being pro-active rather than re-active.

g. Actions when dealing with an unconscious swimmer

Firstly, candidates should be re-assured that although rare, they do need to be prepared to deal with an unconscious swimmer should it arise. The theory section should broadly cover the outlining 'process' (IE Identification by paddler, opening the airway, raising the alarm, support from other personnel, transfer of casualty back to land, medical hand-over). The need for quick identification of an unconscious casualty should be re-enforced to candidates along with the need to open the casualty's airway.

h. Working with other elements of the water safety team

This section should give candidates a broad overview of other elements of the water safety team, their roles, and how they all support each other. This should be linked to examples of dealing with minor incidents & unconscious casualties.

i. Debriefing & emotional support

Particularly in relation to an unconscious casualty, candidates should be made aware of the importance to fully debrief about any incident and the need to make a written statement as soon as practically possible – even if the event organiser isn't requesting it. Candidates should also be made aware of the natural emotional response to dealing with an unconscious casualty and the need to talk to somebody about those feelings. Finally, candidates should also be encouraged to question and suggest improvements to safety arrangements after an event should they feel they could be improved in future.

Unit 2: Practical Skills

a. Swimming in a wetsuit in open water

The purpose of this task is to give candidates an understanding of how daunting it can be to swim in a wetsuit for the first time in open water and really just to put candidates into swimmers shoes for a moment. Elements such as 'mass starts' or swimming in close proximity to others may also provide candidates with a better understanding of a swimmers experience.

b. Positioning of the kayak

This section should look at where and how the kayak is positioned for best use/effectiveness.

Example Task: Candidates should work in pairs, one swimming and the other based in their boat. The swimmer should just swim to a fixed point whilst being aware of their partner's location. The paddler should then experiment paddling very close to the swimmer and also much further away. The aim is for the candidate to experience what it's like to have a paddler too close and also slightly too far away.

Candidates should also discuss how to position their boat to be most effective, particularly when trying to direct swimmers and scan zones. Attention should be paid to how the angle of the boat could subliminally 'guide' swimmers in the right direction without impeding their swim.

c. Dealing with common issues

Candidates should demonstrate ways to deal with common issues such as cramp, tight wetsuits and injuries following on from the discussions in the theory module. Candidates should also simulate requesting a (minor) casualty extraction.

d. Dealing with an unconscious casualty

i. Actions from within the kayak

Candidates should demonstrate the actions required upon identification of an unconscious casualty from within their kayak. This should involve approaching at speed, raising the alarm, opening the airway & requesting an immediate evacuation. These elements should be broken down, discussed, demonstrated and practiced as much as required.

Example task (Approaching at speed): A marker buoy should be placed a set distance away from the candidates. Individually they should paddle up to the marker buoy at speed and performing a controlled stop just before reaching the casualty without touching the buoy with their boat/paddle. They should come to a complete stop beside the buoy and should then tap the buoy with their hand to signify they would be ready to deal with the casualty. The aim of the task is to give candidates the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the technique of approaching a casualty at speed but in a controlled way, without injuring the casualty. The task could be extended to place a human casualty in the water (face down) with the candidate being required to approach at speed and then turn the casualty over/open the airway.

ii. Entering the water – performing expired air ventilation (EAV)

In this section, candidates are being asked to enter the water to perform EAV on a casualty. Again, it should be emphasised that although the likely need to perform this is rare, it's vitally important that candidates are capable of carrying it out if required. The section should extend from the previous skill up to the point of opening the airway. Candidates should then cover exiting the boat, supporting the casualty in the water & performing EAV. Candidates should be made aware of the difference between EAV and CPR and the importance of correctly sealing the mouth during EAV (mouth to nose resus). Candidates should have the opportunity to practice this skill as much as possible. It may be beneficial to demonstrate and allow candidates to practice the pistol grip/mouth to nose resus on land first to enable them to familiarise themselves with the technique.

This task could be carried out towards the end of the course to put candidates' skills to the test.

Example task: One candidate should be based in their boat. The others should be in wetsuits (BAs optional) swimming. A swim area (not more than 20m long) should be setup and the 'swimmers' will be asked to swim from one end of the swim area to the other. Before starting, one swimmer will be tasked with being an unconscious casualty at some point during the swim – the candidate in the boat should not be aware as to who has been chosen to be the casualty. Their task is to supervise the swimmers as they swim from one end to the other, dealing with the unconscious swimmer as soon as they identify them. They should enter the swim zone and enter the water to perform EAV as per their training.