

AUSTSWIM GUIDELINES

AQUA

Background and Terminology

It is common practice that the nature of the aqua class is based on:

- casual participation for the intention of recreational, health and wellbeing, social, and/or fitness outcomes
- the premise that, for some, the aquatic environment is often the only effective setting in which they can gain positive physical activity benefits
- participants attending a class who may be well and healthy but present with a medical condition and/or limited functionality
- the knowledge that the aqua instructor is AUSTSWIM licensed or fitness registered to deliver safe and effective sessions to meet the diverse needs of the participants.

The term 'aqua' refers to classes where educational learning outcomes of health, wellness and water safety are the focus. Aqua instructors are responsible for participants within these classes. Aqua instructors are not qualified or responsible for general supervision of an aquatic environment.

AUSTSWIM Aqua Charter

The AUSTSWIM Aqua Charter provides best practice guidelines for:

1. Aquatic/fitness industry accreditation/registration
2. Public and private venues, including hotel/motel, apartments, body corporate, schools, resorts and holiday parks delivering aqua programs
3. Community members visiting pools
4. Scope of the aqua instructor in program delivery.

Aqua Focus

The aqua instructor focus is to develop strong foundation strategies to plan, instruct, monitor and evaluate group water-based exercise classes that may:

- Encourage physical activity and general health and wellbeing
- Enhance social interaction and engagement
- Facilitate improved balance and mobility
- Develop water safety awareness and skill
- Improve water familiarisation knowledge and skill
- Encourage physical activity, fitness, endurance and flexibility
- Improve self-confidence and emotional wellbeing.

1. ACCREDITATION AND LICENSING

Training

The Department of Education and Training is responsible for national policies and programs that help Australians access quality and affordable Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The aqua instructor skill set includes nationally recognised units of competency from the SIS10 Sport, Fitness and Recreation Training Package that is the national framework for skills development for the industry and includes:

- specific aqua knowledge
- water safety skills
- understanding of effective instructor delivery techniques appropriate to the target market.

Current units of competency for the aqua instructor skill set may be found at <http://www.austswim.com.au/wets-aqua/enrol-into-a-wets-course>

The VET skill set includes basic competencies for the WETS aqua instructor course. AUSTSWIM Licence requirements are, however, over and above the aforementioned skill set. These additional AUSTSWIM requirements are documented on the AUSTSWIM website at <http://www.austswim.com.au/wets-aqua/enrol-into-a-wets-course>

A Water Safety Approach

Prior to 2016, learning units for the aqua instructor skill set neglected to include water safety, risk management and specific population competencies. The industry driven by AUSTSWIM has recognised the potential hazardous nature of aquatic environments and has been instrumental in ensuring accurate knowledge, skill and awareness of these essential elements which are now included in the current aqua skill set. Instructors without the risk management and specific population competency are limited to delivering mainstream classes for healthy participants or may seek further education to up skill.

Scope of Accreditation

Successful completion of the AUSTSWIM WETS aqua instructor course incorporates extended learning elements aligned with AUSTSWIM standards. Teachers who hold this accreditation are licensed and insured to conduct classes for aqua participants.

AUSTSWIM encourages instructors to enhance their knowledge, skill and understanding through attendance at annual conferences, internal and external workshops, enrolling in further formal training programs and peer networking and learning opportunities. Ongoing professional development is a requirement when renewing the AUSTSWIM Licence.

Instructors must have specific understanding, aptitude, patience and enthusiasm for instructing physical activity in the form of aqua activity for specific population groups and continue their education in order to remain up to date with current new developments.

Aqua instructors are required to hold:

- an AUSTSWIM Licence and/or
- Fitness Body Registration with Aqua Specialisation (units of competency that include water safety, first aid, CPR and risk management).

The aqua instructor is not qualified to provide:

AUSTSWIM advises that classes delivered by aqua instructors are not intended for therapeutic, diagnostic or rehabilitation purposes (for example, classes specifically designed for hydrotherapy, pre/post pregnancy classes, cardiac, stroke recovery, back injury, or other similar sessions) unless further education has been completed.

2. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE VENUES

It is the responsibility of the employer to provide employees/contractors with practices which include a thorough workplace induction, details and protocols for Emergency Management and Risk Assessment. Employees/contractors must be aware of relevant manufacturer warranties and Australian Standards relating to the use and operation of equipment, hoists, other accessories and program equipment as listed in these Guidelines.

At the venue the participant may require special consideration to be given to:

- staff ratios ensuring safe and effective class sessions
- equipment and aids that are in good working order
- water and air temperature that comply with Guidelines for Safe Pool Operations (GSPO)
- water depth that is suitable for the specific activity
- adherence to the Disability Discrimination (DDA), Privacy and Racial and Vilification Acts.

The aqua instructor should operate within their level of comfort and training in addition to maintaining a duty of care towards participants at all times.

Supervision

The aqua instructor is responsible and owes a duty of care to participants in the class, not other users at the facility.

The aqua instructor may be considered the sole pool supervisor where class participants are the ONLY participants in the pool. Employers, however, must ensure the aqua instructor is competent in:

- facility function
- emergency management
- current water rescue competency*
- current resuscitation and first aid qualifications.

** Perform Basic Water Rescues unit of competency that must be assessed on an annual basis by the employer or Certification for Pool / Surf Lifeguard, Bronze Medallion*

Emergency / Evacuation

After securing the safety of participants in the class, the aqua instructor may be required to assist in any emergency action or processes as and when they arise under the direction of a responsible person, example, facility duty manager, chief or area warden.

It is an employer's responsibility to assess and ensure employees and contractors ongoing competency of all emergency management and current water rescue, resuscitation and, in the case of a sole operator, a mandatory first aid qualification.

Class Size and Ratios

Factors influencing and impacting class size may include:

- the environment
- space availability – participants should be spaced at least double arm distance from each other and the wall/swimming lap lane
- movement functionality and experience of participants
- class type and intensity

- water depth
- water temperature.

| Aqua Licensed / Registered Instructor | Maximum ratio | Water Safety Supervision Requirements Deep and Shallow Class |
|--|--|--|
| Sole supervision* <i>(No lifeguard present)</i> Class participants are the only people in the pool | 1 aqua instructor teaching in the pool to 10 participants 1 aqua instructor teaching on pool deck to 25 participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aqua Licence or Aqua Fitness Registration which includes additional current competency in water rescue appropriate to the venue* • Current resuscitation and first aid qualification** • Access to rescue, emergency and communication equipment |
| Shared supervision <i>(Qualified and current Lifeguard or Bronze Medallion holder is present)</i> | 1 aqua instructor teaching on pool deck to 45 participants 1 aqua instructor teaching on pool deck with additional supervision also on pool deck to more than 45 participants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aqua Licence or Aqua Fitness Registration which includes additional current competency in water rescue appropriate to the venue* • Current resuscitation and first aid qualification** • Access to rescue, emergency and communication equipment • The additional supervisor must hold competency in water rescue appropriate to the venue* |

*Statement of Attainment; Perform Basic Water Rescues, AUSTSWIM Licence, current Pool Lifeguard, Bronze Medallion or Surf Lifesaver qualification. For the purpose of these guidelines 'appropriate to the venue' is defined as the instructor competent to conduct a rescue in the deepest section of the pool.

**First Aid and CPR certificates must be current at all times in order for the AUSTSWIM WETS Licence to remain valid. Insurance will become invalid if first aid or CPR certificates expire.
<http://www.austswim.com.au/wets-aqua/enrol-into-a-wets-course>

Water Quality

Facilities must be maintained in accordance with standards, legislation and guidelines specified by state, local authorities and industry regarding safety, water purity and sanitary conditions.

- Water purification standards for public swimming pools and spa pools are available from state/territory health authorities.
- Industry best practice GSPO detail facility operation standards.
- The person(s) responsible for monitoring water quality must be suitably qualified and comply with legislation requirements.
- Teachers should be aware of pool water quality and report any concerns to the appropriate personnel.

Outdoor Venues

Swimming and water safety programs can be conducted in outdoor pools. Employers and aqua instructors must consider weather conditions and water temperature as these may necessitate an adjustment to class structure and duration. Lessons should not exceed 30 minutes duration and participants must be kept active in the water and not left sitting or standing on the edge of the pool, as the cooler air temperature may cause rapid loss of body heat or sun rays may have a burning effect.

Ambient Temperature Recommendations for aqua instructors

The ambient temperature should be comparable to water temperature; where it exceeds this temperature, an anchored fan with an earth leakage or DC low voltage lead is recommended to assist with cooling the aqua instructor. Instructors must ensure they remain hydrated throughout the class.

In circumstances where air and water temperature cannot be maintained at optimum levels, sessions must be cancelled or appropriate alternative learning options provided.

Information Disclosure and Privacy Act

Medical and other pertinent information that may impact on participation and learning should be disclosed. Adult participants, parents/carers have a right to choose whether or not to disclose information. Every effort must be taken to encourage disclosure of information pertinent to or impacting on participants taking part in aqua programs.

Disclosed information is subject to legislation within the federal Privacy Act and as such is subject to protection controls as it is disseminated to regular and replacement aqua instructors.

Aquatic Environmental Conditions

| Water Temp | Description of Specific Populations and Class Type <i>At all times, instructors must encourage participants to rehydrate regularly</i> |
|------------|--|
| 20 - 24°C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High intensity moves with regular travel activities for fit and healthy participants |
| 24 - 27°C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continual on the spot and/or travelling movement patterns Limited weighted/grounded movement Additional energetic or jogging movements Extra turbulent and suspended movements Ideal temperature for Aqua, High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), Boot Camp classes |
| 28 - 30°C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal temperature for participants who present with heat intolerant medical conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, Menopause, Graves Disease Suitable for healthy participants who move at a moderate to high level and include a balance of actions that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weighted / grounded; two feet on pool floor for the move energetic turbulent; and suspended movement patterns Interval and choreographed programs are suited to this pool temperature Pregnant women must be encouraged to self-pace the intensity of their activity. The Borg scale is commonly used to limit intensity and women should be directed to exercise somewhere between 12 -14 (somewhat hard) on the 6-20 Borg scale, or use the 'talk test' which allows the women to maintain a conversation during exercise* |

| Water Temp | Description of Specific Populations and Class Type <i>At all times, instructors must encourage participants to rehydrate regularly</i> |
|------------|--|
| | http://www.getmoving.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/263155/Fitness_Australia_cardiovascular_exercise_prescription_for_healthy_adults1.pdf |
| 30 - 32°C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower, interval paced moves with a longer warm up, recovery and cool down • Ideal temperature for participants with joint related conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis etc. • People who are heat intolerant must exercise with caution at this temperature • Water temperature at no more than 32°C is suitable for healthy pregnant participants in their second or third trimester, exercising at moderate intensity levels |
| 33 – 36°C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants with acute pain, arthritic or some neurological conditions will benefit from immersion and gentle activity in a water temperature of 34°C – 35°C • This pool temperature is appropriate for class formats such as Aqua Stretch / Relax, Ai Chi, Poolates, Watsu and gentle movement activity classes • Observe, analyse and monitor movement activity to ensure positive results • Pregnant women participating in non-aerobic/gentle movement/relaxation may exercise in water up to 35°* |

**Australian guidelines for aquatic physiotherapists working in and/or managing hydrotherapy pools; Second Edition 2015 Australian Physiotherapy Association.*

Class Areas

The participant’s area in the water and instructor delivery space must be clearly defined and signage provided appropriate to the class type. Allocated class space should enable participants to be spaced at a double spread arm distance between themselves, other users, pool walls or other obstacles.

Note: Sun glare may be a consideration in presenting classes. In such situations, instructors must position themselves in order to reduce the impact of sun glare for themselves and participants.

Aqua Equipment for participants and instructors

- A headset microphone is recommended when delivering activities on pool deck. Where possible, speakers should be placed facing a solid wall or positioned to reduce sound travelling across the entire pool area; this aids in keeping sound within the confines of the class.
- Sound systems must be connected appropriately with earth leakage or DC low voltage leads.
- Aqua equipment placed on pool deck must not impede concourse traffic flow and must be placed to avoid trip hazards to the aqua instructor and others.
- Mats and/or running boards, Aquaframe used by aqua instructors to reduce impact must be in good condition and professionally constructed of non-slip material. Training is recommended prior to use.
- Aqua equipment should be regularly checked for quality, condition and suitability for classes.
- Participants should be introduced to how their body will react while using equipment in different depths while moving at different speeds
- For deep-water classes, flotation devices should be available as required.
- Faulty equipment must be removed from use.

3. SCOPE OF THE AQUA INSTRUCTOR IN PROGRAM DELIVERY

Role and Responsibilities

The aqua instructor must:

- arrive at the class with sufficient time to ensure set up of equipment and instructing area
- ensure appropriate pool deck or in pool positioning to enable full scanning of the roped off designated class area at all times.

The aqua instructor must provide an introductory preamble that provides participants with information including:

- emergency procedures (how to raise the alarm), how the instructor will respond and the role of participants in following directions/instructions
- an overview of the outcome of the class
- pacing themselves appropriately, including taking breaks as required and immediately notifying the instructor if dizziness or a feeling of discomfort occurs
- the importance of regular hydration
- caution on wet surfaces.

The Instructor must use the warm up component to:

- assess the functional mobility, water comfort and confidence of participants
- empower participants to exercise according to their current physical and emotional status and personal aspirations
- encourage participants with a medical condition or injury to seek and follow guidelines as recommended by their health practitioner.

During the class, the aqua instructor must observe, analyse and modify participants' movement patterns to ensure safety, enhance ease of movement and encourage appropriate participation. <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/publicpools/Pages/steps-to-healthy-swimming.aspx>

Water Depth for Participants

Classes are predominately conducted in a vertical body position, however, they may also include supine and prone activity for participants familiar with a sculling action.

Shallow water classes should be conducted in water depth no greater than participants' shoulder height and preferably at armpit height. Propulsion activities should be limited when water depth is less than waist height. The instructor should use skills and knowledge gained during the training to observe, analyse and modify the movement patterns appropriate for the participant and the water depth.

Deep-water classes (ie. classes where participants are not able to touch the pool floor) must be delivered by an accredited aqua instructor who can confidently perform a deep-water rescue and has had additional professional training in this discipline.

| Water depth and appropriate movement patterns | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Between Hip and Chest Depth | Chest Depth | Above Chest Depth | Deep Water (ie. unable to touch pool floor) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce vertical propulsion movement Include low impact moves Increase supine, prone and travel activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the ideal water depth Include weighted/grounded energetic, turbulent and suspended moves Medium to high activity intensity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate more travel moves Suitable for suspended movement Flotation equipment should be available Instructor must be confident to perform a rescue at the deepest end of the pool | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise vertical, prone and supine movements On the spot exercises Travel moves (if space allows) Use equipment Instructor must be confident to perform a rescue at the deepest end of the pool |
| Participants | | | |
| Between Hip and Chest Depth | Chest Depth | Above Chest Depth | Deep Water (ie. unable to touch pool floor) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants with upper body injuries should squat or avoid activity in this depth Pregnant women may find this depth uncomfortable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal for all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water confident | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fit, active and water confident |

Entry, Exit and Activity

The aqua instructor must have visual control of all participants upon entering, during and exiting the class to ensure best practice standards. It is not the responsibility of the aqua instructor to lead participants into the pool. Only trained personnel are permitted to use a hoist.

Specific Populations

Access and inclusion participants (ie. people with mobility limitation, neurological conditions), or an intellectual disability) may have defined requirements and stipulated minimum and maximum ratios prescribed by relevant national organisations. Aqua instructors are encouraged to seek advice from these organisations or the Australian Guidelines for Aquatic Physiotherapists working in and/or managing hydrotherapy pools. Aqua instructors leading groups for the access and inclusion market are required to have demonstrated competency with specific population groups during their industry training or gained additional professional development training prior to delivery.

Children and Adolescents

- AUSTSWIM does **NOT** recommend participation by children under the age of 10 in adult aqua classes, however, if a child under the age of 10 does participate, they must be accompanied by an active supervisor aged 18 years or older. This person must remain within arm's reach of the child at all times.
- AUSTSWIM advocates aqua classes specifically designed for children provided they are undertaken by appropriately trained, accredited and licensed instructors who have additional professional development or training in this discipline. The class must be conducted in appropriate water conditions for participants.
- aqua instructors are required to have a current Working With Children Check (WWCC). Visit aifs.gov.au for further information and state/territory contacts. Licensed/Registered aqua instructors are required to keep their WWCC valid at all times.

Older Adults

The older adult aqua participant should not be categorised by chronological labelling, rather by physical activity ability. The aqua instructor is encouraged to provide movement and intensity options for a plethora of participants.

For the older adult, water provides a comfortable exercise environment where both social and physical gains can be achieved. The exercises designed for the older adult should be non stressful, mobilising and strengthening for the purposes of maintaining flexibility and coordination. Individual differences will dictate the degree of optional variants.

Entry and exit points should be suitable for the older adult participant. Whilst the aqua instructor must be attentive during entry and exit times, they are not responsible for assisting participants in and out of the water.

Pregnancy

All healthy pregnant women without contraindications are encouraged to participate at a lower intensity level during the mainstream aqua class. The supportive and buoyant effects of water are conducive to pregnant women participating in aqua classes to maintain their health and wellbeing during pregnancy. Pregnant women must always be monitored for increases in body temperature; the instructor must use observation and questioning techniques.

The aqua instructor should refer to a physiotherapist or GP if the woman indicates complications with her pregnancy, including pelvic girdle pain, musculoskeletal conditions, hypertension, blood pressure related problems, diabetes, multiple pregnancies, heart, vascular or renal disease.

The aqua instructor who has completed the specific populations unit of competency will be armed with the knowledge to enable pregnant women to attend a mainstream aqua class. However, aqua classes run exclusively for pregnant women will require the aqua instructor to have completed additional specialist training.

http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au/APAWCM/The_APA/National_Groups/Aquatic/APAWCM/The_APA/National_Groups/Aquatic.aspx?hkey=625403c5-6db2-430e-99a1-1ab8747bcf64

Conclusion

AUSTSWIM encourages aquatic activity for all community members and is committed to proactively addressing strategies within the Australian Water Safety Council's (AWSC) drowning prevention plan. Creating opportunities for more aqua professionals addresses a key priority area within the AWSC Strategy 2016 - 2020.

For some, the aquatic environment is often the only effective setting in which to remain active. The results of people remaining physically active are known to have long-term positive benefits on health and wellbeing. Lap swimming, horizontal physical activity may not always be an option; the vertical activity provided by aqua is a very viable option that has resulted in the ongoing popularity of 'aqua'.