



**Department of
Education**

Appendix L: Paddling

Effective: 21 July 2025

Version: 3.3

Last updated: 16 June 2026

Paddling

This document contains specific requirements related to paddling activities and must be read in conjunction with Appendix A: General requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools procedures.

1. Background

Schools conduct a range of paddling activities in a variety of contexts. The activities include single day excursions, basic level skill development in swimming pools or on calm water, through to advanced paddling skills on open waters, and/or on white water up to Grade 3. Skill development programs often culminate with extended expeditions.

This activity-specific document provides mandated requirements for rafting, canoeing, kayaking and a range of other paddle craft (including inflatable craft).

Any person propelling a recreational canoe, kayak, surf ski, stand-up paddle board (SUP), inflatable or similar craft by paddle must comply with Department of Transport marine laws.

Definitions

Assistant supervisor

Assists the Qualified supervisor and/or Department teacher-in-charge. Must have recent and relevant experience in the activity, at the level being offered to the students.

Calm water

A still or slow-moving water environment with no to low swell, within **400 meters** of a safe landing point. These areas may include a sheltered or protected coastal area or river, dam, waterhole or inland water body.

Department teacher-in-charge

A member of the teaching staff employed by the Department of Education (or an Approved provider) and managing the school activity. For information relating to Approved providers refer to Appendix A: General requirements.

Fixed location

Within **200 metres** of the initial launching point.

Group one paddle craft

Watercraft that are not intended for use with spray decks, do not conceal any part of a person's body and do not pose a potential hazard for entrapment allowing for the immediate exit of a person in the event of a capsize.

This includes but is not limited to: Stand-Up Paddle Board; Single and Double Sit-on-Top Kayaks; Open Canoe; Inflatable Rafts; Single or double skis: Ocean Racing, Molokai, Spec, Long Plastic and Short Plastic.

Group two paddle craft

All watercraft that conceals any part of a person's body, can be used with a spray deck and/or have the potential to cause body entrapment in the event of a capsize.

This includes but is not limited to: single, double, triple, four-persons, and Multi-Sport Kayaks; Wild-Water, Guppy, Short Recreational, Slalom, Polo Bat, Play-boat, Freestyle, Creeker, and General White-Water Kayaks; Sea, Estuary, Short Plastic, Long Plastic and Touring Kayaks; Wild-Water, Slalom, C1, and C2 Canoes.

Lead supervisor

The member of the supervisory team in the lead position when on an expedition.

Low swell

Shore breaking waves that are on average less than 0.5 meters and have a times wave gap of greater than 8 seconds.

Non-fixed location

Any area beyond **200 metres** from the initial launching point.

Open water

An unprotected water environment that may be fast flowing or turbulent, such as a surf beach, flowing river or waterway, tidal coastal water, or areas affected by swell and or/strong currents. This also applies to calm water areas greater than **400 meters** from a safe landing point.

Paddling

The propulsion and steering of water-based craft, by a person or persons, using a paddle with either single or double ended blade.

Protected waters

Includes rivers, lakes, estuaries, harbours and waters within 400 meters from the shore in unprotected waters but excludes the Cambridge Gulf and Lake Argyle (refer Department of Transport).

Qualified supervisor

Has the required qualifications, skill, experience and technical knowledge to instruct the activity.

Remote or isolated areas

Includes any location where medical emergency assistance is more than one hour away by road, air and/or water.

Safe landing point

Where a person can safely enter and/or exit the water unassisted. This excludes areas unsuitable for landing that may include but are not limited to; vertical cliffs, low lying reefs, or areas affected by rebounding waves.

Shore

An area of land adjacent to the water. These areas may include low lying land, a beach, wharf, jetty or similar rigid structure attached to land.

Surf

The mass/or line of foam created by swell and the breaking of waves against the shore.

Swimming pool

A controlled, indoor or outdoor, still water environment contained within an artificial structure, monitored for water quality.

Unprotected waters

Waters beyond **400 metres** from the shore

White water

Where the water current is sufficient enough to create hydrological features that may include but are not limited to; rapids, eddies, whirlpools etc. See the following International River Grading System guidance to assist with the identification of white water.

International river grading system	
Grade/ Class of White Water	Classification
1	EASY: Slow to medium flowing water with very small, regular waves or riffles. Relatively few obstacles, with an easy path to find and follow. Suitable for novices.
2	MEDIUM: Rapids are straightforward with medium sized, regular waves. The path through the rapids can be easily seen from the water and is often indicated by well-defined chutes or V's of water. There are some obstacles that require manoeuvring around, but paddlers with a good command of basic strokes can easily miss them.
3	DIFFICULT: Rapids have moderate, irregular waves and strong currents. Manoeuvring is required to follow the preferred route. Small to medium sized stoppers may have to be negotiated. The route is difficult for inexperienced paddlers to see and scouting is advisable. Suitable for experienced white-water paddlers, with the ability to roll an advantage.
4-6	White water rafting on Grade/Class 4 rapids or above is <u>strictly prohibited</u> .

2. Environment

Each aquatic environment is unique, and open/unprotected water environments can be more hazardous than calm/protected water environments.

When assessing the suitability of a location, access to resources, services and facilities also need to be considered (for example, toilets, drinking water, external communication and assistance).

Students must only be exposed to environments or locations that have been assessed and deemed appropriate by the Department teacher-in-charge for the students' capacity, skills and experience, the planned activities, and the supervision required.

Research and/or a reconnaissance trip must be conducted around desired locations well in advance to confirm sites are suitable for the group size and competency levels.

Water depth must be appropriate for the activity.

Supervisors must be aware of the occurrence of rogue waves, which may be up to twice the height of current swell. Approximately 1 in every 7 waves will be higher than the average swell conditions on any given day.

Strong winds can differ from location to location (for example, calm versus open water). Activities **must not** occur, if strong wind or gale warnings are current or forecast.

Paddling activities **must not** be conducted in strong tidal areas, on a lee-shore where there is no safe landing point (for example, where there is wind blowing on-shore in rocky areas), where a river is in flood, or in known estuarine crocodile habitats. Refer to Be Crocwise for additional information.

If activities are in ocean or estuarine environments, checks must be made directly prior to the activity regarding shark sightings or alerts in the area of use. In the event of a shark sighting

the activity may need to be postponed or modified. Information is available from the [SharkSmart](#) website. The activity must be cancelled immediately if a shark warning alert is sounded.

Sea kayaking **must not** be conducted beyond **5km** of shore (refer to supervision tables for year-level requirements).

It is recommended that wave ski activities are conducted at patrolled beaches. Wave ski areas should be determined in consultation with beach control authorities.

Weather considerations

Weather conditions must be assessed and monitored in the days leading up to, on the day of, and during the activity. The supervisory team may need to cancel, modify or relocate the activity at any time. If weather conditions deteriorate and become unfavourable, all participants must return to shore immediately. The Department teacher-in-charge must check the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) for up-to-date conditions and weather warnings.

Prior to conducting the activity, the Department teacher-in-charge should access information regarding wave height, weather and coastal conditions:

- Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) website or SLSWA X (previously Twitter)
- [Beachsafe](#)
- [Bureau of Meteorology](#)
- [Weatherzone](#)
- [Seabreeze](#)
- [Swellnet](#).

Consideration must be given to wind-eddies, rocks, shallows and other navigational hazards.

Guidance

Sources of information regarding the venue may include:

- the venue manager
- the local ranger or land manager
- experienced paddlers with knowledge of the location
- paddling club
- books, guides, articles
- a professional lifeguard
- other schools that have conducted similar activities in that location
- an external provider
- [Outdoors WA](#).

Selected areas may be defined by the use of on shore marker buoys, flags, natural features or other nominated craft.

3. Capacity of students

Prior to commencing any paddling activity, the Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that each student has the capacity and/or support to enable them to control the craft at the proposed location, as well as the swimming and water safety skills to participate safely.

The Department teacher-in-charge in consultation with the qualified supervisor, determines whether the students will need to develop additional skills to safely participate in all activities, particularly if an expedition is proposed. Additional activities planned for the expedition (for example, camping) must meet the mandated requirements in the relevant activity specific document.

Primary-aged students must **only** undertake seated paddling activities in swimming pools or calm water environments. Primary school students are **not** permitted to use stand-up paddle boards.

Students must be able to demonstrate the required lead-up skills for the paddle craft. These may include:

- where spray decks are used, students are practiced and experienced in their use
- demonstrate proficiency in capsize and exit drills.

Students with a disability or impairment, or who have had limited exposure to water-based activities, may participate in paddling activities provided adequate safety and control measures are implemented. Specific consideration is given to:

- the impact of the student's ability to safely participate in the activity
- location and access
- water supervision levels
- suitable flotation devices, if required
- providing curriculum adjustments so the student can access the activity on the same basis as their peers
- availability and suitability of the craft
- on-shore assistance and supervision.

Alternative, modified or adjusted activities must be provided for students who do not have the capacity to participate.

The Department teacher-in-charge and relevant supervisors must be aware of health care maintenance and/or any intensive health care needs of students (asthma, epilepsy etc.), particularly allergic reactions to stings or bites in a marine environment (anaphylaxis). Protective equipment such as gloves and appropriate exposure suits should be considered for students who are susceptible.

Students who have a medically diagnosed condition that may impact their safety must be cleared by a medical practitioner before they can participate.

A re-assessment of students' capacity is undertaken if any circumstances surrounding the activity change. This includes any change in the condition of the aquatic environment, their medical fitness, or their capacity to undertake the activity.

Guidance

The Department's [Swimming and Water Safety Continuum](#) and the [Safety Survival Sequence](#) (refer to Swimming and Water Safety Activities document) within the [Swimming Instructors Handbook and Guidelines](#) and Royal Life Saving Swim and Survive [Instructor Assessment Guide](#) are useful resources for gauging students' swimming and water safety skills. They are only indicative of student skills at the time of assessment and their use does not guarantee students' safety, nor reduce a teacher's duty of care responsibilities.

Prior to engaging in paddling activities, students should be able to:

- swim 200 metres in less than seven (7) minutes; and
- support themselves in water for a minimum of fifteen (15) minutes without the aid of a flotation device.

Calm water - non-fixed locations

Where students are developing additional techniques and/or increasing their repertoire of skills as part of an educational course, a formal assessment of basic paddling skills should be conducted. Where the distance travelled from a calm water, non-fixed location is greater than 200m from the initial entry point, participants should also be able to:

- keep their craft within 50 metres of the instructor at all times
- swim under a craft with an approved Level 100 or 50 life jacket and surface on the other side

- use and check equipment appropriately
- select attire that is appropriate to various conditions
- perform basic paddling strokes
- (for example, basic craft manoeuvres such as pivoting, performing lateral, forwards and backwards movements, turning, carrying out; support, bracing and emergency stops)
- empty a craft
- perform a self-rescue
- conduct a deep water assisted rescue.

Open waters and white water

Before paddling on open waters, in addition to the skills expected for calm water non-fixed locations, students should also be able to:

- perform basic paddling strokes including support bracing
- perform basic manoeuvres, including emergency stops
- conduct practical capsize and broadside drills and procedures
- conduct buddy gear checks
- carry out self, T or X rescues and other relevant safety practices.

4. Student health care

Refer to Appendix A: General requirements for further requirements.

5. Activities

Activities conducted in aquatic environments require a high degree of risk analysis and management.

The Department teacher-in-charge must assess the full range of activities to be conducted as part of the paddling program, before making final decisions about the activities and areas to be used.

Activity boundaries and procedures must be clearly defined to the supervisory team and students prior to launching, to prevent craft becoming dispersed.

Rafting

White water rafting on Grade/Class 4 rapids or above is prohibited.

There must be a strong educational benefit to include rafting as part of a teaching and learning program, for it to be deemed appropriate. Each student must demonstrate their proficiency in the grade of water in which the rafting activity will be undertaken.

Paddling

Primary school students (Years K-6) are **not** permitted to use stand-up paddle boards (SUPs).

For all other paddling activities primary school students must remain in a calm water environment and not travel greater than **100 metres** from a safe landing point at any time.

For secondary school students (Years 7-12), when the distance travelled in calm water is greater than **200 metres** from a safe landing point, the following parameters must be adhered to:

- there must be no more than twelve (12) craft per supervisor
- the group must stay within 400m of a safe landing point.

For open water activities it is recommended that trips are planned to follow the natural coastline.

If a crossing is greater than **1km** (for example, paddling from island to island), a safety or support craft must be present.

Sea kayaking

Sea kayaking **must not** be conducted beyond **5km** of shore.

To clarify information about coastal voyage such as a sea trek, contact the Department of Transport Marine.

Guidance

Time available and distances to be travelled are based on the slowest or least competent member of the group. Time should be allowed for portaging, lining, rest, mishaps and refreshment stops.

Hazards in flowing water including trees, logs, rocks, fences, rapids and other navigational hazards should be viewed and assessed before running them.

There should be only one craft on a rapid at any one time.

6. Equipment

Prior to the activity, the Department teacher-in-charge must provide students with an equipment list that includes details about:

- enclosed footwear for use in aquatic environments
- protective clothing appropriate for environment (including sun safety) and potential weather conditions
- change of clothes and towel for use after the activity.

It is recommended that students wear brightly coloured, highly visible clothing that suits the activity weather conditions (for example, brightly coloured thermal rash shirts).

Students must be protected from excessive exposure to sunlight increasing the risk of sunburn (for example, using hats, protective clothing, sunblock and sunglasses).

The Department teacher-in-charge must ensure that all equipment is checked to confirm that it is appropriate to the activity, safe and in working order.

Appropriate first aid equipment must be readily accessible and waterproofed. The first aid kit/s must include items that are appropriate for the activity, environment or location, size and needs of the group, and duration of the activity.

Paddle craft must:

- be of a suitable design and construction for the environmental conditions
- be appropriate for the students' age, capacity and experience
- a design such that: emptying, using the correct technique, does not create an undue physical stress and the crew and gear are supported when the craft is full of water.

Lifejackets

All participants must wear a life jacket at all times when within 3m of the water's edge. Life jackets approved for general use must bear the relevant Standard or stamp (currently AS4758 or ISO 12402) Level 50S or higher, when paddling on all waters.

Whistles must be attached to lifejackets.

All lifejackets *must* be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's advice. The supervisory team must confirm that the condition of the life jackets is checked to ensure there are no cuts or tears and straps and buckles are in good condition.

For further information about lifejackets, refer to the Department of Transport Marine.

Hard shell helmets with drainage holes must be worn while paddling in water where there may be safety hazards (for example, rapids, tree sections and surf).

If proceeding more than **400 metres** from the shore in open/unprotected waters, all craft must carry a compliant GPS enabled Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) or Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), as well as two red and two orange handheld flares or an Electronic Visual Distress Signal (EVDS). If using a PLB it must be attached to the participant in the case that they become separated from the vessel. Please refer to the Department of Transport Marine.

For extended offshore voyages, consider travelling with another paddle craft or support craft and logging on and off with the local volunteer marine rescue group.

In case of emergency, appropriate communication equipment must be readily available. Mobile phones must be available for use in an emergency situation (with allowance made for the fact that they do not operate in all localities). Where there is no mobile phone coverage, MHz, MF/HF or VHF radios should be used (27- MHz radios are being phased out and will no longer be compliant from 1 September 2028). A satellite phone is an alternative option. Consideration should be given to carrying a GPS enabled EPIRB and/or the viability of participating in water-based activities in locations where access to emergency services and communication is limited.

Communication equipment (whistles, phones, radios etc.) must be waterproofed, secure and readily accessible at all times.

For information on safety, equipment rules and responsibilities refer to Department of Transport *Marine*.

Guidance

It is recommended that the Department teacher-in-charge takes or delegates responsibility to an appropriate supervisor for the group's first aid kit and communication devices.

All water paddling - non-fixed locations

For all paddling activities in non-fixed locations the Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the group carries the following items:

- a repair kit
- spare paddle
- throw bag
- tow rope
- first aid equipment
- spare dry clothing
- high energy food
- rescue kit for moving water
- emergency communications equipment.

The rescue kit for all paddle activities, in all water environments, must include:

- a whistle
- a throw bag containing 15 metres of floating non-absorbent static rope that is 8-10 millimetres in diameter
- two carabiners
- two prussiks
- a tape sling
- 50cm of 25mm breathing tube - as a minimum

- a life-saving ring or inflatable lifejacket
- a sharp knife
- a rescue saw, if in white water.

All emergency gear must be stowed in, or tied securely to, the craft.

Open water paddling activities

The **lead supervisor's craft** must carry:

- safety equipment recommended by the Department of Transport
- relevant communication devices (for example, an in-date registered GPS enabled EPIRB or PLB when operating more than **400m** offshore, on extended or remote coastal tours, or if it is anticipated that the marine transceiver could be ineffective)
- an in-date inshore distress flare kit
- one bilge pump for each group of six kayaks (if not self-draining - not applicable for group one craft except open canoes)
- two red handheld flares, and two orange smoke flares
- a first aid kit
- 15 metres of 7mm diameter buoyant, brightly coloured rope that can be attached to the kayak.

For trips beyond **1km** offshore: a marine radio or transceiver that is functional in the area of the activity and a heliograph mirror must be carried.

Beyond **400 metres** from a shore **all other paddle craft** must carry:

- two red handheld flares or an in-date GPS enabled EPIRB/PLB attached to a participant
- a bailer or pump (not applicable for group one craft except open canoes)
- spray decks to be worn in conditions where waves or surf may be encountered (not applicable for group one craft)
- a whistle (attached to life jacket) for each participant
- appropriate paddles for the craft
- a supply of fresh water; the amount to be determined by the Department teacher-in-charge.

Safety or support power craft

Where a safety or support power boat is required to accompany paddlers, the craft must comply with Department of Transport Marine: Recreational Boating or the Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012 requirements.

A safety tether lanyard must be worn by the power boat driver at all times.

Guidance

For further information about specific water environments refer to:

- Australian Adventure Activity Good Practice Guide: Enclosed and Coastal Waters Paddle-craft.
- Australian Adventure Activity Good Practice Guide: Inland Water Paddle-craft.

Handholds should be securely fitted to the bow and stern of canoes and kayaks in such a way that a full hand cannot be inserted through the loop.

Paddle length should be appropriate to the size and strength of the students.

Information about safety equipment, rules and regulations can be accessed through the Department of Transport, Marine Safety.

7. The supervisory team

Refer to [Appendix A: General requirements](#) for further requirements.

8. External providers

The Department teacher-in-charge must ensure that external providers are made aware of the documentation they need to provide, or that must be sighted.

External providers must follow all mandated requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures and will be asked to supply copies of certain documentation, and/or make them available for the Department teacher-in-charge to sight. External providers should familiarise themselves with [Appendix A: General Requirements](#) and [Appendix D: External Provider Checklist](#).

9. Minimum qualifications and competencies

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in paddling, and have the appropriate recent and relevant experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during paddling activities.

Minimum qualifications and/or formal training accreditations:

Different levels of supervision are required for canoeing, kayaking and sea kayaking activities in open and calm water locations; and for activities conducted from fixed and non-fixed locations.

The supervisory team must collectively:

- be able to perform first aid (hold a current first aid qualification that is relevant to the activity and location)
- be able to administer CPR (have current CPR accreditation) have documented activity-specific evidence of recent and relevant experience
- have a current aquatic rescue qualification and experience in performing rescues that are appropriate for paddling activities at the proposed location.

At least one member of the supervisory team must hold the following:

Environment	Supervisors must have:	<u>AND</u> an aquatic rescue qualification
Calm water (fixed location)	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location; or • Flat water skills set; or • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	A relevant aquatic rescue for the intended environment, including CPR, as recognised through a registered training organisation (RTO): • Skill set to effect deep water rescues for intended craft/s and one of the following: • RLSSA Bronze Medallion • SLSSA Bronze Medallion • RLSSA School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) certificate • Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) Community Surf Rescue certificate.
Calm water (non-fixed location)	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location; and • Flat water guide qualification: or • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	A relevant aquatic rescue for the intended environment, including CPR, as recognised through a registered training organisation (RTO): • Skill set to effect deep water rescues for intended craft/s and one of the following: • RLSSA Bronze Medallion • SLSSA Bronze Medallion

		• RLSSA School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) certificate • Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) Community Surf Rescue certificate.
Open water: Group one craft	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location and one of the following: • Coastal guide qualification • Sea skills qualification or higher • Flat water guide qualification, with moving water endorsement • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	A relevant aquatic rescue for the intended environment: • Skill set to effect deep water rescues for intended craft/s and one of the following: • RLSSA Bronze Medallion • SLSSA Bronze Medallion • RLSSA School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) certificate • Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) Community Surf Rescue certificate.
Open water - (within 200m fixed location): Group two craft	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location and one of the following: • Flat water guide qualification with moving water endorsement • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	A relevant aquatic rescue for the intended environment: • Skill set to effect deep water rescues for intended craft/s and one of the following: • SLSSA Bronze Medallion • RLSSA School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) certificate • Surf Life Saving WA (SLSWA) Community Surf Rescue certificate.
White water (up to and including Grade 2 rapids): Group two craft	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location and one of the following: • White water guide qualification • Flat water guide with moving water endorsement • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	A relevant aquatic rescue for the intended environment: • Skill set to effect deep water rescues for intended craft/s and one of the following: • Paddle Australia White Water Rescue 1 (or higher) award • SLSSA Bronze Medallion • RLSSA School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) certificate • Swift Water Rescue (or higher) award (comprising 3 units of competency).
Open water (within 1000m of the shore): Group two craft	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location and one of the following: • Enclosed Sea Guide qualification • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	A relevant aquatic rescue for the intended environment: • Skill set to effect deep water rescues for intended craft/s and one of the following: • Paddle Australia White Water Rescue 1 (or higher) award • SLSSA Bronze Medallion. • RLSSA School Teacher Aquatic Rescue Training (START) certificate • Swift Water Rescue (or higher) award (comprising 3 units of competency).
Open water (locations greater than 1000m and less than 5000m from the shore): Group two craft	• Recent logged experience and skills in the type of craft used at the location and • Enclosed Sea Guide qualification or • An equivalent (or higher) award, as recognised by the Director General.	

Guidance

Rescue and resuscitation qualifications are current for twelve months.

When venturing **beyond 200 metres** from the initial launching point in open water, there must be at least two experienced supervisors at all times. One of these supervisors must be a qualified supervisor who leads the activity; the other experienced (or qualified) supervisor assists.

Safety or support craft

Where a safety or support craft is used, the supervisor in control of the craft must:

- hold a Recreational Skippers Ticket (RST)
- demonstrate skills in handling the craft being used
- wear a safety tether lanyard at all times
- have recent and logged experience in performing rescue and retrieving a paddle craft
- either be a qualified and experienced Safety Boat Operator or hold one of the following:
 - an Australian Sailing Power Boat Handling certificate (PBH)
 - Surf Life Saving Australia Inshore Rescue Boat Driver award
 - Rescue Water Craft Operator award
 - hold a relevant commercial ticket.

The Department teacher-in-charge must be satisfied that the supervisor operating a safety or support craft has recent, relevant and logged experience in providing relevant support and effecting a rescue for the activity and location.

Skills and experience

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team:

- has recent, relevant and logged experience in the activity at the level being offered to students
- has the relevant qualifications (including first aid and CPR)
- understands the emergency responses and supervision responsibilities.

It is recommended that all members of the supervisory team have recent, relevant and logged experience in paddling activities, are able to demonstrate paddling skills in the type of craft being used at the location, and have knowledge of:

- paddling techniques and specific paddle craft instruction
- specific local weather patterns and land and/or marine weather forecasts for the duration of the activity
- emergency response procedures
- rescue techniques
- group management.

As water conditions can alter suddenly, members of the supervisory team conducting kayaking activities in an ocean environment should also have experience and knowledge of:

- sea kayak instruction
- rescue techniques
- the location of other possible boat traffic, particularly shipping lanes
- coastal navigation techniques, including using coastal charts and marine navigation markers
- boating regulations
- tide charts and local tide conditions and local surf zones, rips and current, including surf types and patterns if surf is likely to be encountered.

Guidance

Records of qualifications

A record of staff swimming and water safety qualifications should be maintained by the school. The date of issue of the qualification and formal notification of any subsequent renewal or upgrade should be included. Staff should keep a logbook of specific activity experience including skills practiced, hours completed, location observations and observable weather conditions.

10. Minimum levels of supervision

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in the relevant paddling activities and have the appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during the activity.

The level of risk in aquatic environments is dynamic and must be constantly monitored and assessed. The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring students in the water must be maintained at all times.

Different levels of supervision are required for:

- group one craft and group two craft activities
- open and calm water environments
- fixed and non-fixed locations.

In addition to minimum mandated supervision requirements, the Department teacher in charge must also consider additional requirements after considering the:

- type of activity and type of paddle craft to be used
- age, capacity, experience and skills of each student
- qualifications, capacity and experience of the supervisor(s)
- students' medical conditions, disabilities or impairments
- nature of the environment.

For extended offshore voyages, consider travelling with another paddle craft or support craft and logging on and off with the local volunteer marine rescue group.

A second supervisor is not required for all aquatic environments, provided that there are clear systems in place so that supervisors can quickly summon assistance if required.

Greater supervision must be provided for less able students.

Students must be within the qualified supervisor's line of sight at all times. If activity goes outside of line-of-sight additional supervisors are required to maintain adequate supervision.

Guidance

The qualified supervisor is responsible for the decision for participants to self-guide a river section. If self-guided, each student must be deemed competent to the level considered reasonable for the river section by the qualified supervisor.

Group one paddle craft

All water environments and all paddle craft

Kindergarten - Year 3

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten - Year 3.

Swimming pool

Year 4 - 6

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every 12 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor)
- a maximum of eight craft per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof
- it is recommended a maximum of 12 craft per supervisor.

Calm water - fixed location (**within 200m** of initial launching point)

Year 4 – 6

Students in Years 4 – 6 in this environment must **not exceed 100 meters** from a safe landing point at any time.

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every 12 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of eight craft per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof and
- it is recommended a maximum of 12 craft per supervisor.

Calm water - non-fixed location

Year 4 - 6

Students in Years 4 - 6 in this environment must **not exceed 100 meters** from the shore at any time.

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of six craft per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

Calm water environments must **not exceed 400 meters** from shore at any point in time.

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of 12 craft per supervisor.

Open water and white water up to grade 2 rapids - fixed location (**within 200m** of initial launching point)

Years 4 - 6

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten - Year 6.

Year 7 - 12

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every 12 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of eight craft per supervisor.

Open water - non-fixed location: **0m – 1km** from safe landing point

Kindergarten - Year 9

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten - Year 9.

Years 10 - 12

There must be two qualified supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of six craft per supervisor.

Open water: **1km to 5km** from safe landing point

Kindergarten - Year 10

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten - Year 10.

Years 11 and 12

There must be two qualified supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every four students or part thereof and
- a maximum of four craft per supervisor.

The following table illustrates the supervision requirements for common group sizes. Groups at all times must remain within the prescribed supervision ratios and any limits set out earlier in this document.

Group one paddle craft

Year level	Environment	Number of students	Qualified supervisor	Assistant Supervisor	Total supervisory team
K - 3	All water environments	Not permitted.			
4 - 6	Swimming pool	1 - 24	1	1	2
	Calm water- fixed location (0 - 200m) (within 100m of a safe landing point at all times)	1 - 24	1	1	2
	Calm water- non-fixed location (within 100m of the shore at all times)	1 - 16	1	1	2
	Open water	Not permitted			
7 - 12	Swimming pool	1 - 24	1	0	1
	Calm water- fixed location (0 - 200m)	1 - 24	1	0	1
	Calm water- non-fixed location (within 400m of the shore at all times)	1 - 24	1	1	2
		25 - 32	2	0	2
	Open water and White Water - up to grade 2 rapids - fixed location (0 - 200m).	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	2	0	2
		25 - 32	2	1	3
7 - 9	Open water – non-fixed location - 0m - 1000m from a safe landing point.	Not permitted			
10 - 12	Open water – Non-fixed location - 200m - 1000m from a safe landing point	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	2	1	3
7 - 10	Open water - 1000m - 5000m from a safe landing point	Not permitted			
11 - 12	Open water-1000m - 5000m from a safe landing point	1 - 8	2	0	2
		9 - 12	3	0	3
		13 - 16	4	0	4

Group two paddle craft

All water environments and all paddle craft

Kindergarten - Year 3

This activity **must not** be undertaken for students in Kindergarten to Year 3.

Swimming pool

Year 4 - 6

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of eight craft per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 24 students or part thereof and
- a maximum of 12 craft per supervisor.

Calm water - fixed location (within **200m** of initial launching point)

Year 4 - 6

Students in Years 4 - 6 in this environment must **not exceed 100 meters** from a safe landing point at any time.

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of eight craft per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

Recommended two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof and
- a maximum of 12 craft per supervisor.

Calm water - non-fixed location

Year 4 - 6

Students in Years 4 - 6 in this environment must **not exceed 100 meters** from a safe landing point at any time.

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of six craft per supervisor.

Year 7 - 12

Calm water environments must **not exceed 400m** from shore at any point in time.

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of 12 craft per supervisor.

Open water and grade 2 rapids - fixed location (**within 200m** of initial launching point):
Kindergarten - Year 6

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten to Year 6.

Year 7 - 12

There must be two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 16 students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of eight craft per supervisor.

Open water non-fixed location: **200m – 1km** safe landing point

Kindergarten - Year 9

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten to Year 9.

Year 10 - 12

There must be two qualified supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every eight students or part thereof
- one supervisor for every eight students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor) and
- a maximum of six craft per supervisor.

Open water: **1km – 5km** safe landing point

Kindergarten - Year 10

This activity **must not** be undertaken by students in Kindergarten to Year 10.

Year 11 and 12

There must be two qualified supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every four students or part thereof and
- a maximum of four craft per supervisor.

The following table illustrates the supervision requirements for common group sizes. Groups at all times must remain within the prescribed supervision ratios and any limits set out earlier in this document.

Group two paddle craft

Year level	Environment	Number of students	Qualified supervisor	Assistant Supervisor	Total supervisory team
K - 3	All water environments	Not permitted			
4 - 6	Swimming pool	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	1	2	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
	Calm water- fixed location (0 - 200m) (within 100m of a safe landing point at all times)	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
	Calm water- non-fixed location (within 100m of the shore at all times)	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
	Open water	Not permitted			
7 - 12	Swimming pool	1 - 24	1	0	1
		Larger groups are not recommended			
	Calm water- fixed location (0 - 200m)	1 - 22	1	0	1
	Calm water- non-fixed location (within 400m of the shore at all times)	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 32	2	0	2
	Open water and Grade 2 rapids fixed location (0 - 200m)	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
K - 9	Open water – non-fixed location 200m - 1000m from a safe landing point	Not permitted			
10 -12	Open water – non-fixed location 200m - 1000m from a safe landing point	1 - 8	1	1	2
		9 - 16	2	0	2
		17 - 24	3	0	3
		25 - 32	4	0	4
K - 10	Open water - 1000m - 5000m from a safe landing point	Not permitted			
11 - 12	Open water - 1001m - 5000m from a safe landing point	1 - 8	2	0	2
		9 - 12	3	0	3
		13 - 16	4	0	4

11. Supervision strategies

Supervision strategies must:

- confirm that the safety and well-being of students is maintained at all times
- reflect risks associated with the activity
- address circumstances when students are not in clear view of the supervisors
- include students who are not actively participating in the activity.

The appropriate number of supervisors directly monitoring students in the water must be maintained at all times.

All students and members of the supervisory team must conduct appropriate safety checks prior to commencing the activity, and at critical times throughout.

Direct communication must be maintained with students at all times.

Larger groups may need to be separated into pods of smaller sizes. Each pod should have the appropriate supervisory requirements, safety, first aid and communication equipment.

Canoes and kayaks should travel in pods with a maximum diameter spread of 100 metres on rivers, or 200 metres on the ocean.

Supervisors are to monitor students continuously for signs of fatigue or exhaustion.

If other schools or groups are using the same venue, potential risks must be identified, and supervisory strategies put in place to deal with the nature and number of those groups, and any risks that might arise from that situation.

Guidance

For paddling trips, a lead craft is designated whose occupant/s are aware of the planned route and can direct the group to scheduled stops.

A tail craft is also designated.

It is recommended that:

- rules are established to confirm that all students remain in close proximity to the supervisors
- a supervisor with a current first aid qualification travels at the rear of the group
- a buddy system is established so that students can monitor and check the safety and wellbeing of their partner
- a regular head count of all participants is conducted.

Safety or support craft

A safety or support craft must accompany craft travelling **beyond 1km off shore**. The craft must comply with Department of Transport Marine requirements. For activities conducted **less than 1km from shore**, it is recommended that support craft accompany the paddling activity and are appropriate to support the paddle craft being used and affect a rescue if required.

A safety tether lanyard must be worn by the safety or support powerboat driver at all times.

Supervisors must exercise particular caution when students are entering, boarding and/or snorkelling near the propellers of a vessel. A propeller guard is recommended. Propeller aware strategies must be used whenever a person is in the water.

12. Identification of participants

The Department teacher-in-charge must employ systems for identifying students that may include:

- the wearing of lifesaver or swimming caps, neoprene armbands or rash shirts, school t-shirts, vests, bibs, sashes
- confining students to designated areas not being utilised by other schools or members of the public.

Refer to Appendix A: General requirements for further requirements.

13. Communication strategy

Refer to [Appendix A: General requirements](#) for further requirements.

14. Risk management plan

Refer to [Appendix A: General requirements](#) and [Appendix B: Risk Management plan](#) for further requirements.

15. Emergency response plan

Refer to [Appendix A: General requirements](#) and [Appendix C: Emergency Management plan](#) for further requirements.

16. Briefing students and supervisors

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that all participants are briefed about:

- the educational purpose (learning intentions) and the cooperative nature of the activity
- components of the activity (including skills required, for example “righting” drill procedures, and the importance of staying with the craft)
- standards of behaviour, including roles and responsibilities
- hazard identification and safety requirements
- buddy practices and procedures that will be followed if members of the party become lost or separated from the group
- boundaries marked for the activity
- communication signals to gain attention and request assistance
- emergency and evacuation procedures, signals and location of emergency equipment
- how to identify currents, tides, reefs and other potential hazards of the venue, including safe entry and exit points
- minimal impact principles for that location ([Leave No Trace](#) principles).

In addition to the above, the Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team have been briefed about the following:

- the role and location of supervisors
- maintaining supervision ratios (including of those students not involved in the activity)
- modified/adjusted activity requirements for students with a disability or impairment
- the system for identifying students and supervisors
- the route to be followed including pre-determined stops and/or meeting points along the way (if applicable)
- student-specific medical requirements
- conditions associated with hypothermia, sunburn and dehydration
- communication strategies that will be used throughout the activity, including designated signals to gain the attention of the whole group, and to identify when emergency assistance is required
- location of first aid kit and emergency/rescue equipment
- appropriate clothing for the activity and weather conditions, including thermal and sun protection
- aspects of the environment and expected weather conditions.

Special information sessions must be arranged for students or staff who were absent from preparatory briefings.

Guidance

Changing environmental conditions encountered during paddling activities may necessitate the need to brief students while in transit.

Paddle activities in the surf, open water and white-water environments require a rigorous emergency response plan which considers the:

- size, age, strength and previous activity experience of participants
- skills and experience of the supervising staff
- prevailing and forecast weather conditions
- availability of a safety or support craft (power boat and/or emergency vehicle) in the event of an emergency
- the nature of the location.

17. Informed consent

Refer to Appendix A: General requirements for further requirements.