

INTRODUCTION

For industry purpose, the scope of practice for AUSTSWIM licensed or fitness registered aqua instructors is defined with roles and responsibilities clarified in this position paper.

The AUSTSWIM Aquatic Professional Licence for Aqua Instructors have been implemented and enhanced as a result of industry research identifying the knowledge, skill and understanding required to deliver effective and safe aqua classes.

AUSTSWIM AQUA ACCREDITATION – RATIONALE

AUSTSWIM - The Australasian Council for the Teaching of Swimming and Water Safety, formed in 1979 to develop consistent quality training of Teachers of Swimming and Water Safety across Australia and New Zealand.

Today AUSTSWIM is a dynamic and influential, not for profit advocacy body, providing training, accreditation, standards and innovation that benchmark and support safer aquatic participation and drowning prevention strategies. AUSTSWIM collaboratively works with industry partners to ensure best practice in aquatic activities.

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.

BACKGROUND

Aquatic Physical Activity Options

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 ongoing popularity of 'aqua'.

Skill Shortage Identified

A critical shortage of aqua instructors has been identified and documented by the Australian Government Department of Industry and Innovation in its Science Research and Tertiary Education Document* indicating 'there is a critical shortage of aqua instructors and trainers'

*(Environmental Scan 2013, 2014 and 2015).

The growing awareness for health and wellbeing coupled with an ageing population sees the industry responding with increased aqua programming in facilities worldwide. The industry has also identified a critical shortage of accredited, insured and skilled aqua instructors to meet the expanding demand. Supply and demand are at a crossroad; provision of inclusive and accessible aqua classes for community participants is at crisis point.

Historical Impact

Historically Aqua Exercise, in training, accreditation and programming is under the fitness banner and while this appears a textbook fit, in reality it is a forgotten component, often seen as 'that wet add on'.

No accreditation body currently acknowledges an aqua instructor qualification as a stand-alone skill set, despite the fact that the National Training Package recognises such a skill set.

A win:win:win solution

AUSTSWIM leads the way in providing aqua instructor training:

- A win for meeting industry demand.
- A win for providing career pathway options for industry professionals including teachers of swimming and water safety, fitness instructors and allied health professionals.
- A win for participants as classes presented by accredited, insured and skilled aqua instructors become more readily available.

AUSTSWIM's focus is water and education for safer aquatic participation.

AUSTSWIM's accredited Aqua Instructors:

- Undertake training to emerge as skilled professionals
- Are fully registered and licensed
- Gain insurance cover with licensing

Competency to practice aqua is represented through:

- AUSTSWIM Aqua Accreditation – AUSTSWIM WETS Licence
- Registered Exercise Professional – Fitness Australia, Physical Activity Australia

AUSTSWIM Aqua Instructor training is a viable option for candidates seeking to gain the aqua instructor skill set.

COMPLIANCE AND LEARNING PATHWAY

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, namely:

- BSBRSK401 Identify risk and apply risk management processes
- HLTWHS001 Participate in workplace health and safety
- SISCAQU002 Perform basic water rescues
- SISCAQU008 Instruct water familiarisation, buoyancy and mobility skills
- SISFFIT022 Instruct aquatic sessions for specific population groups
- SISFFIT008 Instruct water-based fitness activities
- HLTAID003 Provide first aid

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. AUSTSWIM, recognising the potential hazardous nature of aquatic environments has been instrumental in ensuring accurate knowledge, skill and awareness of these essential elements are included in Aqua Instructor training.

AQUA ACCREDITATION

Learning and Competency

The WETS Aqua Instructor Course comprises face-to-face and online elements as well as pre and post course assessment and workplace training.

Demonstrating competency in all specific skill set requirements results in AUSTSWIM Aqua candidates being issued an appropriate statement of attainment.

Licence and Accreditation

To gain an AUSTSWIM WETS Licence, the AUSTSWIM WETS Aqua accreditation requires proficiency beyond requirements within the National Training Package. These competencies are framed under AUSTSWIM's Learning Pillars, preparing students for the specific Aqua Instructor role.

Water safety, drowning prevention strategies and risk management are an integral element of AUSTSWIM's Learning Pillars.

AUSTSWIM Aqua candidates who successfully complete the WETS Aqua Instructor course and apply for an AUSTSWIM WETS Licence must also submit the following documentation:

- HLTAID001 Provide Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
- AUSTSWIM Declaration and Code of Conduct
- Current Working With Children Check (WWCC).

AQUA INSTRUCTOR CHARACTERISTICS

The Aqua Instructor with a current AUSTSWIM WETS Aqua Licence is qualified and insured 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 improved fitness, endurance and flexibility
- Improve self-confidence and emotional wellbeing.

The Aqua Instructor is not qualified to provide:

- Therapeutic treatment or rehabilitative exercise prescription
- Independent exercise prescription for high risk participants
- Diagnostic opinions
- Sports coaching
- Psychological counseling.

LICENCE AND INSURANCE – Validity and Renewal

The AUSTSWIM WETS Licence is valid for 3 years. Renewal requirements must be completed prior to expiry.

An AUSTSWIM WETS Aqua Instructor who has a valid Licence and resides in Australia or Singapore automatically receives insurance cover as detailed at:

<http://www.austswim.com.au/Teachers/Insurance.aspx>

Licence Renewal

In order to renew a Licence, the AUSTSWIM WETS Aqua Instructor is required to demonstrate evidence that during the previous 3-year period they have:

- Participated in a minimum 10 hours of aqua professional development
- Delivered a minimum of 40 hours of aqua classes
- A current first aid qualification
- A current CPR qualification
- A current Working with Children Check (State or Territory appropriate)