

Qualification Guidance Overview

Introduction

This information provides an overview of qualifications provided by **Swim Ireland** related to the teaching and coaching of aquatic activities. Aquatics covers a wide range of activities but in the context of this document relates to the following;

- Swimming Teaching (referred to as teaching aquatics)
- Swimming Coaching
- Coaching Synchronised swimming
- Coaching Diving
- Coaching Water Polo
- Aquatic Fitness*
- Swimming for people with disabilities
- Adult and Child Water Activities*

**NB: These qualifications require you to hold teaching aquatic qualifications before progressing to these disciplines.*

What is Swim Ireland?

Swim Ireland encompasses the four provinces of Ireland and is the National Governing Body for swimming, water polo, diving and associated aquatic disciplines in Ireland. It has over 12,000 members and 150 Affiliated Clubs. Its primary funding comes from money received from the Irish Sports Council, and members' affiliation fees.

Swim Ireland aims to foster and develop swimming, diving, water polo and associated aquatic disciplines, both competitive and otherwise and to promote the development of physical and social benefits that come from swimming and its associated disciplines.

Swim Ireland's vision for swimming is to create an environment that facilitates each member reaching his/her potential in the sport of swimming. There are three strategic pillars to this vision:

- Participation - to break down barriers and to seek to increase participation in swimming in Ireland.
- Performance - to create an environment so that individuals can develop their swimming potential in a national setting.
- High Performance - to help our leading swimmers to achieve world class performance by fair and ethical means.

Swim Ireland Education

Swim Ireland Education has overall responsibility for the initial training and ongoing development of aquatic teachers and coaches. In line with accepted best practice the education arm of **Swim Ireland** comprises two independent sections, **Swim Ireland** Awarding Body and the **Swim Ireland** Delivery Body. The awarding body develops and quality assures qualifications whilst the delivery body is responsible, through a national network of approved centres, for the delivery of courses that lead towards a **Swim Ireland** qualification. Qualifications offered by **Swim Ireland** are available across 32 counties in Ireland and are recognised throughout the UK and in many other countries throughout the world.

Swim Ireland Education is recognised by the Irish Sports Council, Sport Northern Ireland, Coaching Ireland and British Swimming as being the principle provider of aquatic education in Ireland. The recent development of the United Kingdom Coaching Certificates (UKCC) has set the standard for teacher/coach education throughout the UK and through **Swim Ireland's** links with British Swimming* and Coaching Ireland* **Swim Ireland** has tailored its qualifications to ensure compatibility with those offered throughout the UK.

**British Swimming is the National Governing Body for swimming, diving, synchronised swimming, water polo and open water in Great Britain and comprises the national governing bodies of England, Scotland and Wales.*

**Coaching Ireland's primary aims are to educate and support coaches and also to provide services to players and athletes in the context of the Irish Sports Council Policies.*

Qualifications

At the beginning of this leaflet there is an overview of the various disciplines that are covered by the term aquatics. In terms of swimming, qualifications are available for both teaching and coaching but for the disciplines of water polo, synchronised swimming and diving qualifications are only available in the context of coaching. The full list of qualifications offered by **Swim Ireland** is as follows;

| Level | Discipline |
|------------------|--|
| Helper | Swimming for people with disabilities |
| Apprentice Coach | Coaching Swimming |
| Level 1 | Teaching Aquatics Coaching Swimming Coaching Water Polo Coaching Diving Coaching Synchronised Swimming Swimming for People with Disabilities |
| Level 2 | Teaching Aquatics Coaching Swimming Coaching Water polo Coaching Diving Coaching Synchronised Swimming Swimming for people with Disabilities* Adult and Child Water Activities* Aquafit |
| Level 3 | Coaching Swimming |

**NB: These qualifications require you to hold level 1 or level 2 teaching aquatic qualifications before progressing to these disciplines.*

Progression through the levels

A. Helper

The Helper Certificate is an introductory qualification and not a requirement for progressing to Level 1 Teacher of Disabilities. It is primarily designed to assist those who may be interested in working as a volunteer within a club and who want a little more knowledge without the commitment of attending a 'full' course. Most Helper courses can be completed as part of a 'club night' and are largely practical.

Role once qualified – One who is able to help with a club/group activity under the guidance of a qualified level 2 teacher or coach for swimmers with disabilities.

B. Apprentice Coach

The Apprentice Coach Certificate is an introductory qualification and not a requirement for progressing to Level 1. It is primarily designed to keep young swimmers involved in the sport by starting to coach at an earlier age (15 years), it is also to assist those who may be interested in working as a volunteer within a club and who want a little more knowledge without the commitment of attending a 'full' course. Most Apprentice Coach courses can be completed over 1 weekend and are both theoretical and practical based.

Role once qualified – One who is able to help with a club/group activity under the guidance of a qualified level 2 teacher or coach

C. Level 1

The first formally assessed qualification for each discipline is the Level 1 Certificate. If successful at Level 1 you can then proceed to Level 2.

Role once qualified – One who is able to teach/coach in a supporting role, normally working alongside a more experienced and higher qualified teacher or coach.

D. Level 2

Having successfully completed level 1 and gained additional teaching/coaching experience you can then progress to level 2. This will build logically on from the areas that you covered at level 1.

Role once qualified – One who is able to work independently without the need for additional supervision (other than lifeguard cover). The holder of a Level 2 certificate will be equipped to plan, deliver and evaluate a series of consecutive sessions within the context of a self-prepared scheme of work or training cycle.

E. Level 3 and beyond (coaching)

If your interest is in working in a competitive environment the next step is the Level 3 qualification which again will build upon the knowledge and skills developed at levels 1 and 2 and the experience achieved since qualifying at level 2.

Role once qualified – One who is able to plan, implement, analyse and revise annual coaching programmes and to manage the physical and human resources required to support all areas of the club programme.

A level 3 teaching aquatics qualification and a level 4 coaching qualification may be added at some time in the future.

What does a course comprise of?

Each course will vary in terms of technical content but there are some similarities in terms of overall structure. Each qualification is divided into units (the number of units will vary depending on the level of qualification) and some units are common and only need to be taken once. For example at level 1, unit 1 is the same for each discipline. Therefore if you have taken your level 1 in teaching aquatics and you want to take the level 1 in coaching swimming you will not be required to complete unit 1 again. Similarly at level 2 units 1-3 are common to each discipline and units 4-6 is discipline specific.

Each course will be a combination of practical and theory and you will be assessed in both areas. For the practical this will relate largely to your ability to teach/coach a group of participants but you will also be required to show that you can plan lessons/schedules and evaluate the progress of your pupils and also your own teaching/coaching performance. The theoretical assessment will focus largely on the technical aspects of the discipline that you are studying. For example, qualifications in teaching aquatics and coaching swimming will require knowledge of the swimming strokes whilst in water polo you will require knowledge related to the skills and techniques required to participate in the activity. At levels 1 and 2 you will be required to take a written examination; at level 1 this will be through an examination comprising multiple choice questions whilst at level 2 the questions will require slightly more detailed answers. At level 3 each unit will be assessed through worksheets and set tasks and the practical assessment of coaching competence will take place in your club environment

The total number of hours required for each course will be stated and will include time on the course and additional time that you will be required to commit for aspects such as private study, planning etc. Prior to embarking on a course it is important that you are certain that you can meet all the course requirements in terms of time. For guidance purposes the number of contact hours required for each level of qualification is as follows;

Level 1 – 35 Hours

Level 2 – 68 Hours

Level 3 - 100 hours of theory

Practical 12 – 24 weeks of home-based coaching involving 6 – 24 hours per week

NB: See actual qualification for full details. The wide variation for level 3 is dependent upon whether the qualification being taken is for a development coach, performance coach or both.

Course structure

Level 1

All level 1 qualifications comprise 2 units. Unit 1 is common to all of the aquatic strands (teaching aquatics, diving, coaching swimming, synchronised swimming and water polo) and is focused on the “how to teach/coach” skills. Unit 2 is focused on technical knowledge and practical skills appropriate to the discipline being taken. Unit 1 has to be successfully completed before the candidate is allowed to progress onto Unit 2.

Level 2

All level 2 qualifications comprise 6 units. Units 1 - 3 are common to all of the aquatic strands (teaching aquatics, diving, coaching swimming, synchronised swimming and water polo) and have a focus on the “how to teach/coach” skills. Units 4 – 6 are focussed on technical knowledge and practical skills appropriate to the discipline being taken. Units 1 - 5 have to be completed and passed before the candidate is allowed to progress onto Unit 6. Unit 6 for teaching aquatics can be assessed on course or in the candidates club/work environment however for all coaching qualification assessment will only take place in the candidates club/work environment.

Level 3

The Level 3 Certificate comprises 11 units. Units 1 - 6 are common to all of the aquatic coaching strands (diving, coaching swimming, synchronised swimming and water polo) and have a focus on core coaching skills and knowledge. Units 7 – 11 are focussed on technical knowledge and practical skills appropriate to the discipline being taken.

NB: There are specific requirements related to the standard of performer required for the assessment of level 3 coaching qualifications. See qualifications for specific details.

Pre-course requirements

These will vary slightly from course to course and tend to relate to age, experience, qualifications already achieved etc. For example a candidate must be 16 years of age before the start date of a level 1 course and 18 years of age before the start date of a level 2 course. In addition a candidate wishing to enrol on a level 2 course must hold a level 1 certificate or to have been granted exemption (see section 10 below). In addition in order to achieve a level 3 coaching qualification there are certain requirements in terms of the type of facility and standard of performers required to enable the assessment to take place. It is also a requirement for all candidates to have attended a recognised child protection workshop prior to attendance at a course (in those circumstances where it is not possible to attend prior to a course a candidate is required to provide evidence of attendance before a **Swim Ireland** certificate will be released). It is important to check out the pre-course requirements before considering enrolment on a course.

Assessment

Each qualification will utilise a range of assessment methods in order to provide a comprehensive process for the assessment of candidates participating in a course leading to a **Swim Ireland** qualification. The range of methods used is as follows;

- Observation of practical teaching/coaching
- Worksheets and related tasks set by the course tutor
- Oral questioning
- Completion of a candidate log book including the preparation and evaluation of session plans appropriate to the qualification.

Reasonable adjustment policy

Swim Ireland is committed to assisting candidates who have special assessment needs in examinations and/or other aspects of the assessment process. Reasonable adjustments are arrangements which are approved before an examination or assessment takes place to enable candidates who might not otherwise be able to do so, to demonstrate their level of understanding and/or competence. This policy covers a range of difficulties including, speech impairment, physical impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those whose first language is not English. Any candidate who would like to take advantage of this policy has a responsibility to raise the issue with the key contact and/or the course tutor before a course commences or as soon in the course as the need for such adjustments are identified. Details related to the full policy can be found at www.swimireland.ie

Quality assurance

Swim Ireland is committed to ensuring that courses leading to a **Swim Ireland** qualification, and the assessment of candidates participating in the courses, are of a consistently high standard. This is achieved through the following means;

A. Course organisation

Courses leading to Swim Ireland qualifications can only be delivered by tutors accredited by **Swim Ireland** and only in approved centres. Any organisation in Ireland may apply to become an Approved Centre, subject to meeting the centre approval criteria, details of which can be found at www.swimireland.ie. This network of centres aims to be receptive to the needs of the local communities and to provide high quality courses in good facilities. Each centre is required to have a nominated 'Key Contact' who will be the link between the centre and **Swim Ireland** and the centre and the candidates.

B. Course delivery and candidate assessment

Tutors accredited by **Swim Ireland** will have undertaken a rigorous training programme and will have been assessed in line with specific assessment criteria. In addition, tutors will also have undertaken training related to the assessment of candidates which will help to ensure that any assessments undertaken are fair and consistent and utilise assessment methods that are valid and reliable. The role of the assessor is to make sound judgements based upon good evidence.

C. Internal verification

Underpinning the assessment process is a system referred to as internal verification which is carried out by an Internal Verifier (IV). The IV will be appointed by the **Swim Ireland** delivery body to ensure that assessors are working within the guidelines established for the qualification being assessed and are applying the appropriate standards. The IV will sample the assessments made by the tutor/assessor and whilst this process relates specifically to the centre's internal quality assurance of the courses it also helps to bring an external perspective to the assessment process.

D. External Verification

The final strand of the quality assurance process is external verification. This is carried out by an external verifier (EV) who is appointed by the awarding body arm of **Swim Ireland**. The EV monitors the IV and ensures that the standards, processes and criteria established by the awarding body are fully implemented. The EV will work closely with the approved centre to ensure that all aspects of the accredited centre criteria are implemented.

E. Independent assessment

In line with accepted best practice all qualifications offered by **Swim Ireland** will have a part of the assessment process which is completed by appropriately qualified and trained education personnel who have no connection with any aspect of course delivery or the on course assessments. This relates specifically to the written examinations for levels 1 and 2 and the practical club/work place assessment at level 3. In respect of the written examination papers, immediately following a course the papers will be sent, by the key contact, to **Swim Ireland** awarding body who will then forward the papers to one of the centralised marking team. The marking undertaken by the independent markers is monitored by the awarding body and a lead marker who is appointed by the **Swim Ireland** awarding body.

Accreditation of prior learning/achievement

In some instances a candidate may feel that s/he has qualifications and/or experience that are similar to the content and demands of a particular **Swim Ireland** qualification. For example a candidate may have achieved a swimming qualification in another country and may wish for this to be taken into consideration before deciding which **Swim Ireland** qualification to take. Alternatively a candidate may have achieved a previous **Swim Ireland** qualification and may wish to transfer to the revised education programme. In these or similar situations the candidate should, in the first instance, write to **Swim Ireland** awarding body providing full details of the qualification(s) achieved and the appropriate fee. The information provided should include;

- Title of qualification, level and date achieved
- Name of the awarding body e.g., Australian Swimming
- Duration of the course including practical and theoretical aspects
- Content covered in the course
- The assessment process
- What you have done in terms of teaching/coaching since achieving the qualification
- The name of the Swim Ireland qualification you wish to take
- Any other relevant information

NB: Please include a photocopy of the certificate achieved

Once the information submitted has been received by **Swim Ireland** awarding body the request will be considered and the candidate provided with a course of action.

How to find a course

For information on courses and centres close to you visit www.swimireland.ie and click on 'courses' or the 'Education' tab from the main website menu which can be found on the home page. This will provide details of all current courses and will have a local point of contact should you wish to find out more information. Alternatively you could speak direct with a member of the **Swim Ireland** education staff, details of which can be found on the **Swim Ireland** web site (see main menu and click on education).

Commit to the future – become a licensed teacher/coach

Swim Ireland has introduced a licensing scheme for all teachers and coaches that is in line with similar schemes introduced in a wide range of sports and in a number of different countries. The licensing scheme will help to ensure that you are up to date with all new developments and will enhance your future prospects, particularly in terms of employment. One aspect of the licensing scheme relates to your own professional development and **Swim Ireland** provides a range of continuous professional development (CPD) seminars and workshops that will help to ensure that you are fully up to date with any new developments. These sessions also provide a great opportunity for you to meet other swimming teachers and coaches and for you to share ideas and experiences. Full details of the licensing scheme and CPD seminars/workshops can be found at www.swimireland.ie or alternatively speak direct with a member of the **Swim Ireland** education team.

And finally

The new qualifications outlined in this information leaflet provide a stamp of quality that is recognised across Ireland, the UK and in many other countries in the world. By using the experience and expertise of those involved in the development of the UKCC along with the experience and expertise of **Swim Ireland** and Coaching Ireland candidates can be assured that they will receive training of the highest quality, designed to meet the needs of teachers and coaches in the 21st century.

For more information regarding the detail of all **Swim Ireland** qualifications visit www.swimireland.ie