

Recommended ratios for Teaching and Coaching

Teaching and Coaching

Clear Role: The role of the teacher/coach within aquatics is one that is integral to the delivery of safe and effective activities to the benefit of the users. A teacher/coach holds a very different role to that of a lifeguard. However the teacher/coach and lifeguard should always be encouraged to work as a team to ensure safe practice is being carried out in the water. Where the teacher/coach does not hold a full pool lifeguard qualification there must be a qualified lifeguard on duty.

The same recruitment procedures as referenced earlier in this section should also be used for the recruitment of teachers/coaches. Vetting and advice policies can be sought from the relevant Member organisations. The teacher/coach should abide by the relevant member organisation's guidelines and policies for best practice with respect to safeguarding the welfare of children at all times.

Qualifications and Ratios

Pool Operators should ensure that best practice is being followed by all users e.g. teacher/pupil ratios. There are a number of teaching and coaching qualifications that exist and it is important that member organisations should be contacted to advise with regard to the level of qualification of a teacher or coach, and the recommended ratios for particular activities with regards to that level of qualification.

A written risk assessment is necessary to determine specific ratios within each facility. Factors which must be considered include:

- Qualification of teachers, coaches and helpers.
- Skill level of participants.
- Age of participants.
- Pupil background eg cultural, special needs.
- Water depths.
- Space available for the activity.
- Other water users.
- Safety equipment.
- Learning / teaching aids.
- Emergency back up including lifeguard supervision and first aid.
- Reporting procedures.
- Pool layout eg features

The following are some accepted teacher/pupil ratios, which should apply when all of the above safety factors have been considered. These ratios have been developed with the philosophy of one fully qualified teacher present with the relevant number of participants. These are recommendations that relate to programmed activities with a formal structure, that is, supervised, controlled and continuously monitored from the poolside by an appropriately qualified person(s)

Adult and Infant (Baby) classes	12 pairs classified as 1 adult and 1 child 12:1
Non swimmers and beginners	12:1
Improving swimmers	20:1
Mixed ability groups	20:1
Competent swimmers (able to swim 25 m on front and on back and tread water for 2 minutes)	20:1
Synchronised swimmers	20:1
Diving	12:1 beginners and improver divers 15:1 Competitive divers
Water polo training	20:1
Aerobics in deep water	20:1
Aerobics in shallow water	30:1
Competitive swim training	30:1
Disabilities swimming	8:1 to ratios as above – in guidelines This can vary from 1:1 to higher ratios as above. Disability type, help available, depth of water will all influence the pupil/teacher ratio. Many disabilities have their own National organisations, from which more specific advice should be sought.
Schools swimming	As above.

- The above are guidelines only.
- Risk Assessments will determine more specific ratios, if necessary.
- Safe Supervision for teaching and coaching available from Swim Ireland is a useful reference.
- The relevant National Governing Body can advise on the remit of the individuals qualification on an individual basis. In addition the relevant organisation can also advise on how to carry out a risk assessment for the relevant activities being held, or going to be held, in the facility and how to define the relevant ability levels as referenced above.

Teachers' Responsibilities

Teachers and coaches must be trained and able to carry out their role in the pool's Emergency Action Plan (EAP). They must ensure that the pupils understand and regularly practise their response in an emergency. The emergency procedures to evacuate the water and summon assistance are practised regularly in accordance with the requirements of the Emergency Action Plan. Safety considerations must always be paramount. Pool Operators must be able to justify their decisions regarding lifeguard/teacher numbers in a legal and moral context.

The Assistant Teacher

An individual who holds the first level qualification of swimming teaching/coaching should be viewed by the facility operator as a trainee teacher, and must not have sole responsibility for the delivery of any programmed aquatic activity within a facility. The role of the assistant teacher is to assist a fully qualified teacher/coach. There is a huge benefit to facility operators in having this teacher as part of the team, as they can provide additional assistance and supervision to help maintain a safe aquatic environment. Whilst the most favourable option is to have all teachers working from the pool deck, some teachers can be used in the water to help a Level Two teacher on dry land.

Recommended ratios for the use of the assistant teacher under the supervision of an appropriately qualified teacher/coach is as follows:

- 4 pupils to 1 Assistant teacher under the supervision of a fully qualified teacher. This ratio should be reviewed during Risk Assessments on a continuous basis.

Licensing and CPD

It is important as a pool operator that the teachers/coaches employed should follow regular continuing professional development (CPD) training to ensure that all teachers and coaches stay as up to date as possible with relevant teaching practises and methods to ensure safety at all times especially when working with children. The relevant organisations have education and training teams that can advise on best practise in this regard. A number of CPD modules have been developed and are available through your member organisation. Both Swim Ireland and the Irish Water Safety offer a licensing scheme for teachers and coaches to follow which provides qualified teachers and coaches with a license to practise.

Working Conditions

Similarly to lifeguards, swimming teachers also require consideration when working in the swimming pool due to the unique pool environment. Relevant breaks will help a teacher/coach maintain their concentration and efficiency at all times.