



2020

**Awards Scheme
Review**

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Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis and evaluation of the Canoeing Ireland Awards Scheme. Methods of analysis include consultation with users and stakeholders and benchmarking against international best practice. Further information on methods used to gather data and the respondent demographic can be found throughout the document.

Results of data analysed show that while it is recognised by stakeholders that the Awards Scheme content and delivery is meeting the needs of the community, there are areas for improvement which are listed below.

1. Highlight & enhance the Junior Pathway
2. Future changes to the Awards Scheme should reflect and address stakeholder and partner organisations
3. Changes should reflect best practice and modern techniques
4. Development of coaching awards

5. Resource strategically important courses
6. Improve administration associated with the Awards Scheme
7. Improve communications with member community
8. Strengthen revalidation & CPD System
9. Developing mentoring processes within Awards Scheme
10. Revise logbook process and format
11. Address gaps between awards
12. Develop additional resources
13. Facilitate Award Scheme review every 5 years

These recommendations and the associated actions are explained in full in the recommendations, conclusions and actions chapter.

This report was commissioned and signed off by the Board of Canoeing Ireland.

Brian Ogilvie
(President)

Introduction

Welcome to Canoeing Ireland's Awards Scheme Review. Excellence in education and training is a core value of Canoeing Ireland and we consistently strive to enhance and improve the quality of programmes delivered across all paddlesport disciplines. Our Awards Scheme encompasses skills awards and instructor and coach qualifications and is complemented by river safety & rescue and coastal navigation awards. The scheme is highly regarded and has been developed in association with Sport Ireland Coaching within the Euro Paddle Pass programme, which is a project involving eleven National Coaching Federations in Europe. The aim of the project is to create a common system of paddlesport competency awards across Europe.

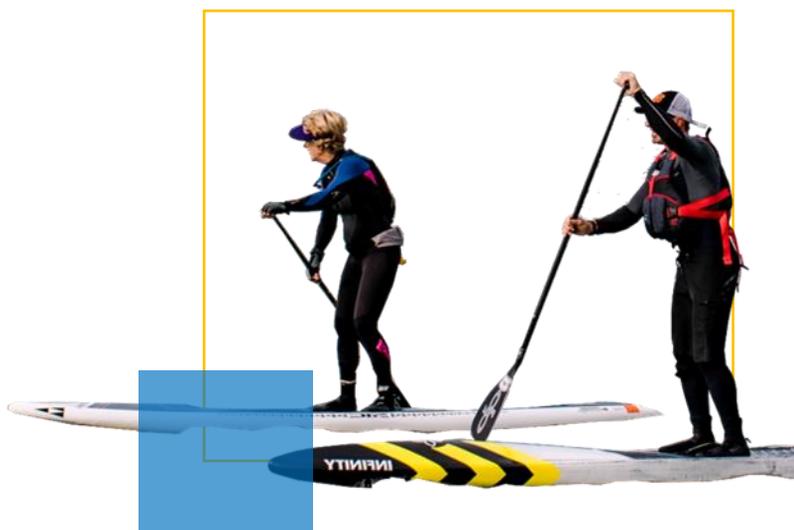
Challenge, enjoyment, relevance, depth, development of the whole person and an adventurous approach to learning are at the core of outdoor pedagogy.

undertaken by the Training & Development Unit (TDU). The result of this work was the creation of a highly structured, informative, standardised, and objective Awards Scheme. Canoeing Ireland recognise the importance of maintaining a relevant, fit for purpose Awards Scheme that enhances the development of paddlesports within Ireland. Engaging in periodical reviews of the Awards Scheme enables Canoeing Ireland to maintain and improve this standard.

The most recent Awards Scheme review was planned to take place in the Canoeing Ireland 2017-2020 Strategic Plan as a primary objective. The aim to enhance and expand the quality, scope, and reach of the current Awards Scheme has been identified and prioritised. The purpose of the review is to determine whether adaptation or revision of the Awards Scheme is required for it to continue to meet the training requirements and expectations of our members and stakeholders.

Rationale/ Justification for Award Scheme Review

In 1998 a comprehensive restructuring of the Irish Canoe Union (ICU) Training Coaching & Accreditation Scheme was



The 2017-2020 Strategic Plan outlines key areas which the Awards Scheme review should focus on:

1. Supporting the development of new awards in emerging disciplines such as SUP, rafting and the competitive disciplines.
2. Reviewing and improving award scheme resources and course materials, in particular, web and audio-visual resources.
3. Strengthening our involvement in the European Paddle Pass programme to create a common system of paddlesport competency awards across Europe.
4. Developing a junior-specific scheme with an emphasis on technical proficiency to improve paddling standards nationally.
5. Developing cross-disciplinary skills progression awards aimed at 6 -16-year olds.

Methodology

To focus the attention of the Awards Scheme review on the current Awards Scheme, Canoeing Ireland engaged in a consultation process in 2019. This process invited feedback from the relevant stakeholders, including the Training and Development Unit, Sport Ireland Coaching, members, clubs, and activity providers. In addition to this, complimentary secondary research was carried out to inform the position of the Awards Scheme in comparison to other international awards schemes, including those involved in the European Paddle Pass. A user case analysis was conducted through the use of feedback surveys, informal interviews, and observations.

This primary piece of research was presented in the form of an online survey which was distributed to all members who engage with the awards scheme.



National Membership Consultation

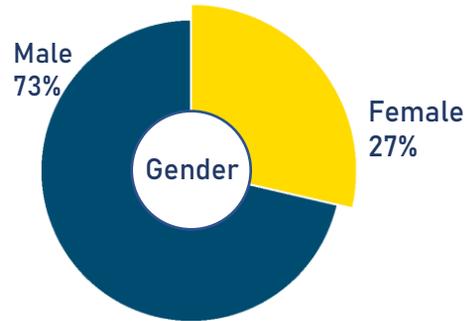
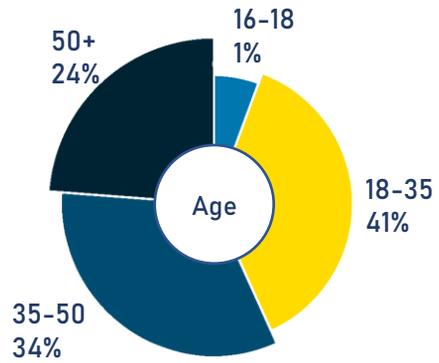
The national membership consultation was carried out by creating a review questionnaire which was developed using an online survey management system. The questionnaire included both quantitative and qualitative data from responders. The questionnaire was distributed through Canoeing Ireland social media channels; targeted emails to members; the Canoeing Ireland website; the Training and Development Unit's social media channels and word of mouth. The questionnaire was live from December 2019 until March 2020.

The questions focused on stakeholder experience and interaction with the Awards Scheme. This allowed scope for both positive and negative feedback on various aspects, including cost, time investment, administration and accessibility. The questionnaire also invited feedback on potential gaps in the scheme in relation to specific individuals and groups.

In addition to gathering both qualitative and quantitative data through the questionnaire, the Awards Scheme review was cross referenced with other feedback surveys including membership surveys and course feedback forms from 2015 to present.

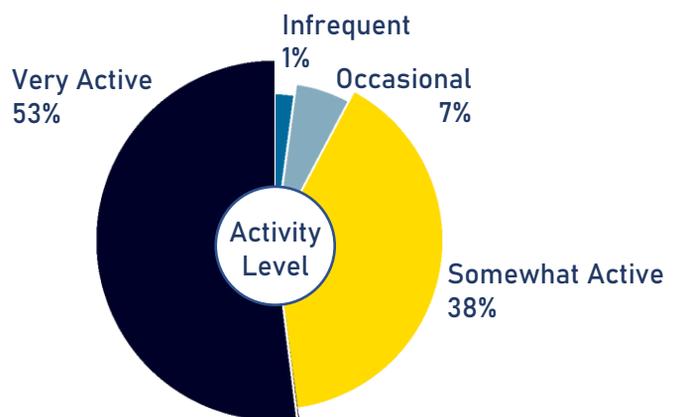
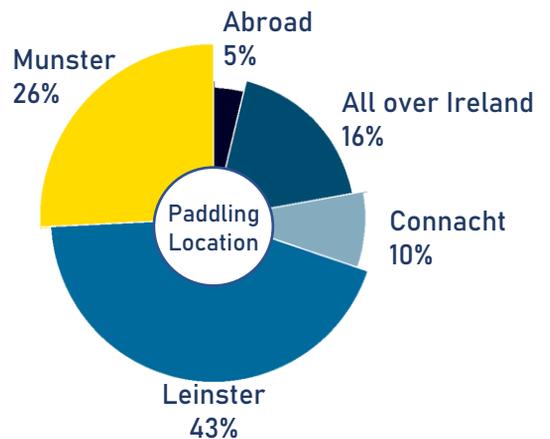
Results of Questionnaire

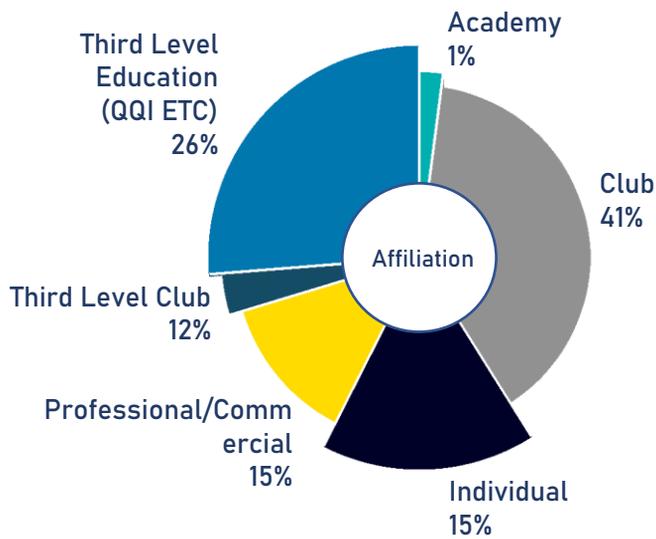
The questionnaire received 91 submissions and was available from December 2019 through to March 2020. The initial survey period was extended due to a low response rate. Responder data was collected to identify the demographic profile, the level of engagement with the current Awards Scheme and the profile of experiences.



National Membership Consultation

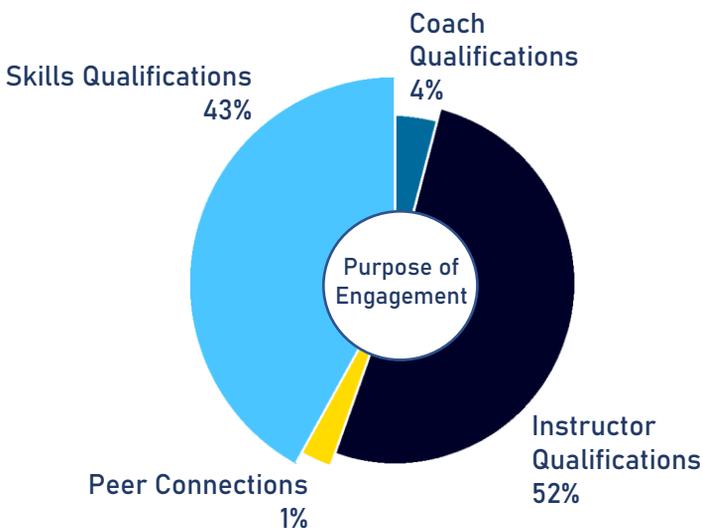
Data was collected to identify the demographic profile of the responder, their level of engagement with the current Awards Scheme and the profile of their experience.





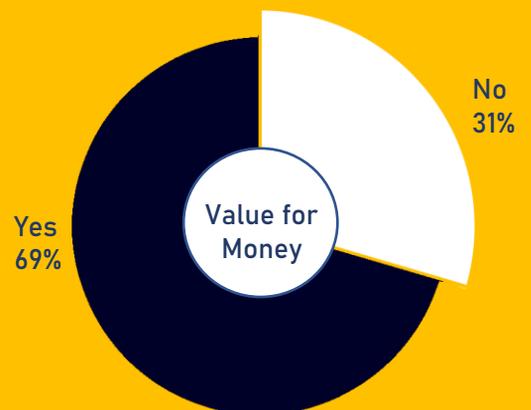
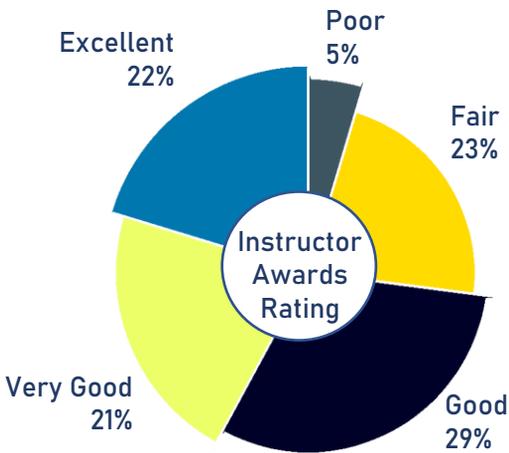
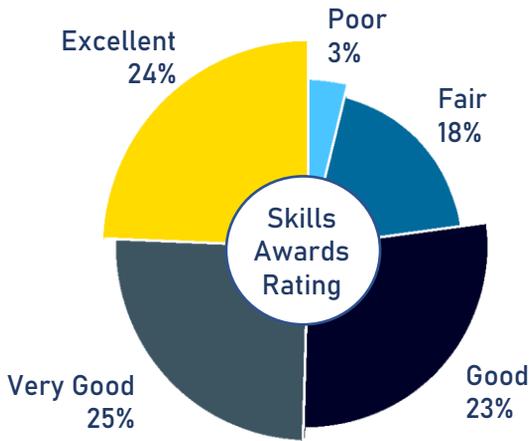
Needs Analysis

In general, the survey returned a strong approval rating for the Awards Scheme. The Instructor Awards received the highest ratings for questions relating to the reasons for why respondents engage with the scheme (52%), and the value respondents placed on the elements of the scheme (Instructor Awards 51%). This corresponds to the demographic of the respondents (73% male/75% 18-50) and the known demographic of the community of instructors nationwide.



Satisfaction Rating

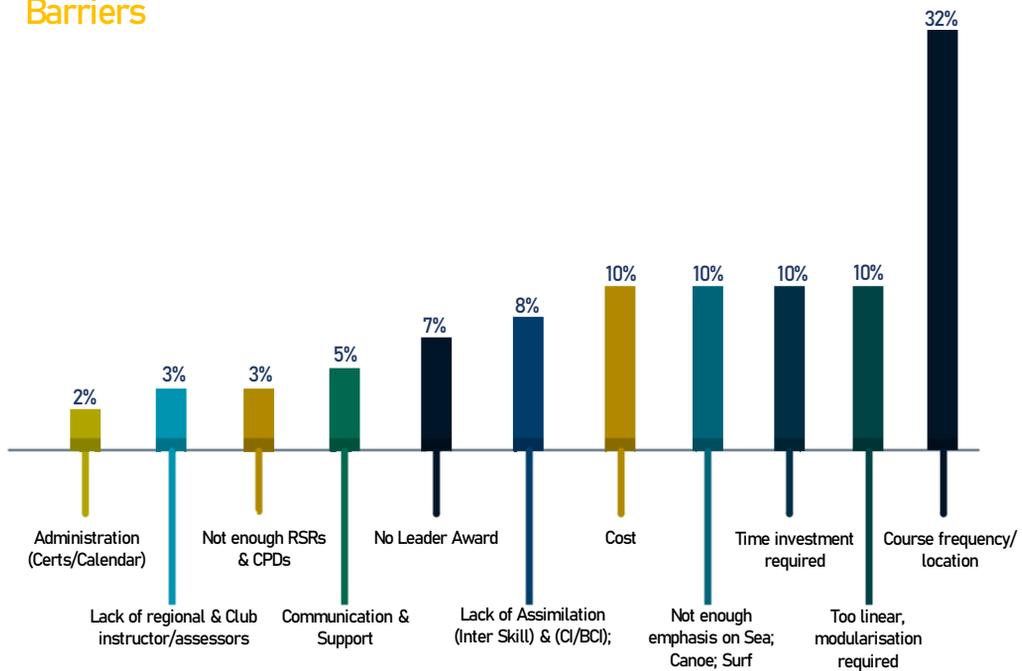
The following charts demonstrate the satisfaction ratings of a range of aspects involved in the current Awards Scheme.



Limitations

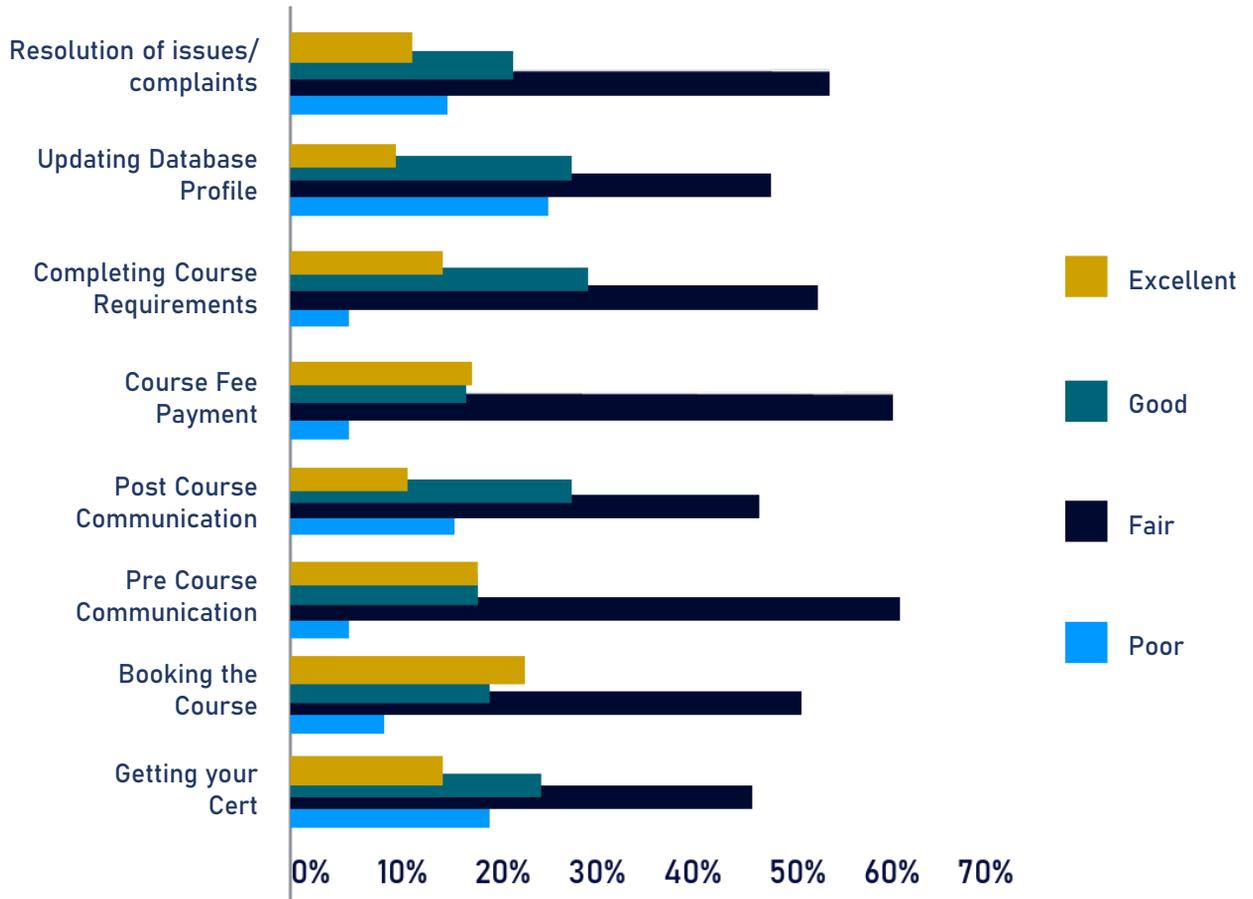
The availability and frequency of courses was returned as the most critical barrier to progression (32%). Time investment, financial outlay, and the linear design of the scheme, while not scoring as highly as the availability of courses, were returned as significant limiting factors (10%). An equivalent score was afforded to a lack of emphasis on sea, canoe and surf qualifications (10%), closely followed by the need for the provision of equivalency and assimilation.

Barriers



Awards Scheme Administration

Although the scores overall were positive, interaction with the database scored poorly in several areas. The scores were predominately mid-table with the highest positive score allocated to course bookings.



Financial Aspects

The cost associated with participating on training courses was considered to be good value, however the overall financial outlay required to complete the award was deemed to be prohibitive. The subject was also interrogated in a wider question bringing in other areas of personal investment including time, travel, equipment etc. While the financial aspect scored highest (28%), the scores were generally evenly spread across the various investment areas.



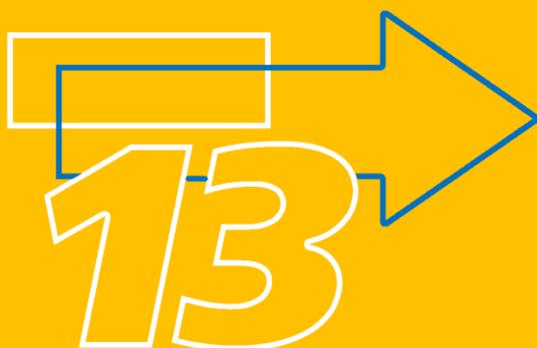
Other Considerations

According to the survey there is 90% support for a revalidation/upskilling process for the coach/instructor awards and strong support (84%) for a mentoring process linked to progression through the scheme. A peer to peer system scored 49% support and CPD's/workshops scored 48%. In relation to support systems offered, just over half of respondents (53%), rated the support offered as adequate to requirements.

The question in relation to the level of incremental improvement possible under the current linear format of the Awards Scheme was evenly divided with 47% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction in this area. Suggestions for additional course material included videos, disability training and digital logbooks.

Recommendations Summary

An analysis of the survey resulted in a list of thirteen recommended improvements.



1. A renewed focus on the Junior Pathway
2. Proposed changes must reflect and address all stakeholders and partner organisations.
3. Changes should be made to better reflect best practice and modern techniques.
4. Focus on the development of the coaching awards.
5. Strategically important courses which may be complex or loss making should be resourced by Canoeing Ireland.
6. A review of administrative processes which underpin the Awards Scheme.
7. Continued improvement in communications between Canoeing Ireland and the paddling community.
8. Full alignment with recommendations from Sport Ireland Coaching and introduce a system of revalidation and continuous professional development (CPD).
9. Develop a mentoring process for the awards scheme participants.
10. Revision of the logbook process and format.
11. Introduce several small changes across the awards to address the gaps and “big jumps”.
12. Development of a wide range of additional resources.
13. A full review of the Awards Scheme every five years.

Awards Scheme Overview

The Awards scheme is primarily based on a community of practice which involves people from across the paddlesports community sharing their knowledge, experience, and skills with each other with the shared goal of practicing paddlesports in a safe and enjoyable manner. The Awards Scheme has two pillars, Skills Qualifications, and Instructor/Coach Qualifications, which can exist separately or in tandem, across a five-tier system.

Level 1-5 Skills Awards - River Kayaking; Sea Kayaking; Open Canoeing, & Paddle Surf

Level	Description	Aims for the paddler
Level 1 Skills	An introductory standard with an emphasis on participation and exploring the sport in a supportive learning environment.	To explore the fundamentals of the sport through games, a small journey/tour and to develop very basic movement skills in the boat.
Level 2 Skills	A basic standard of boat control, developing skills at an introductory level.	To explore methods of developing basic boat control in a benign environment.
Level 3 Skills	Developing intermediate level skills in a low-key dynamic environment. This award is discipline specific.	To become familiar with boat control and the environment associated with discipline specific paddling.
Level 4 Skills	An advanced standard of boat control in a moderately dynamic environment with an emphasis on team interaction.	Develop the skills to “read” the environment and its potential effect on a paddler. Decipher which skills are most effective in that environment. Be involved in group decisions for safety and rescue.
Level 5 Skills	An advanced level of skill, decision making and rescue skills in a very dynamic environment.	To develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies commensurate with paddling in a very dynamic environment with emphasis on paddling skill (boat control), decision making (experience) and rescue/reactive skills.

Levels 1 and 2 are established as non-discipline specific paddlesport awards which will qualify the paddler in the basic skills needed to access level 3 skills in any of the other disciplines with the exception of Open Canoe Skills. Upon completion of these awards, paddlers can choose or be directed to their paddlesport of choice. At level 3 skills standard the Awards Scheme becomes discipline specific due to the nature of the operating environment or design function of the chosen craft.

Skills Awards Outside the Five-Tier System

The Awards Scheme also offers an opportunity for paddlers to achieve qualifications for Sit-On Top (SOT) kayaks and Stand Up Paddleboards (SUP).

Level	Description	Aims for the Paddler
SOT Flatwater Skills	A basic standard of boat control, developing skills at an introductory level.	Develop the skills required to paddle as part of a group with a leader in calm conditions
SOT River Skills	An intermediate standard of skills and knowledge needed to paddle in a low-key dynamic environment	To develop an appreciation of the hazards and risks associated with the river environment and develop boat control skills and tactics to paddle safely on rivers.
SOT Sea Skills	An intermediate standard of the skills and knowledge required to paddle in a low-key dynamic environment at sea.	To develop an appreciation of the hazards and risks associated with tide and weather at sea. Boat control skills development and decision-making tactics required for safe paddling in the sea.
Intro to SUP	An introduction to the basic movement and safety aspects of Stand-Up Paddle boarding.	To perform fundamental movements on a SUP board and develop an awareness of the effects of weather/water conditions.
Flatwater SUP	Development of movement skills as well as preparation for a SUP journey or activity involving prediction of conditions in connection with maps/charts.	To develop board and paddle awareness as well as preventative safety tactics when preparing for a trip/activity. Development of basic rescue skills.

River Safety and Rescue Certificates (RSR)

An integral part of paddlesports is the dedication to safe practice and building a culture of preventative action through sharing experiences, knowledge, skills, tactics, and equipment. The Awards Scheme achieves this for river-based kayaking through the three-tier River Safety & Rescue course (RSR). The three tiers are linked directly to the grading system:

RSR 1 – Linked to the rescues and preventative tactics needed to be safe on Grade 1

RSR 2 – Linked to the rescues and preventative tactics needed to be safe on Grade 2

RSR 3 – Linked to the rescues and preventative tactics needed to be safe on Grade 3 +

River Safety and Rescue courses are run by qualified Canoeing Ireland instructors and are tied into the Skills awards and Instructor awards:

RSR 2 is required to pass a level 4 skills assessment

RSR 3 is required to pass a level 5 skills assessment

Level 2 instructors can run RSR 1 courses

Level 3 instructor can run RSR 2 courses

Level 4 instructors and above can run RSR 3 courses

Coastal Navigation Awards

The Awards Scheme provides two primarily theory-based courses for sea kayakers who would like to learn or improve their knowledge of navigating at sea. The two courses on offer introduce sea kayakers to the skills of navigation through the Essential

Coastal Navigation course and to advance their knowledge in the Advanced Coastal Navigation course. These navigation courses can only be run by a level 4 sea kayak instructor or a level 3 sea kayak instructor with a Yacht Master qualification or equivalent

Course	Aims
Essential Coastal Navigation	To introduce the sea kayaker to the resources, terminology and equipment required with planning and undertaking a trip in moderate sea conditions.
Advanced Coastal Navigation	To develop sea kayaking navigational skills for extended trips in advanced sea state conditions.

Instructor Awards

Paddlers wishing to become instructors within the Awards scheme are qualified under guidelines prescribed by Canoeing Ireland. The pre-requirements are:

1. Current membership of Canoeing Ireland
2. Achievement of the minimum skills awards needed to access the instructor award
3. Being Garda Vetted through Canoeing Ireland
4. Having a recognised first aid qualification
5. Attendance at a relevant instructor training course
6. Fulfilment of the relevant logging process under qualified supervision
7. Passing of an instructor assessment
8. Registering as an instructor through an affiliated club or affiliated provider

This rigorous process is in place to assure minimum standards of safety are maintained. It also provides instructors with a concise pathway to development in an environment and/or discipline specific manner.



The Instructor awards have undergone some fundamental changes in the last number of years. The table below provides an outline description of the Instructor Awards.



Instructor Awards	Vision
Level 1 Instructor	Introduce the sport in a supportive learning environment using games involving basic movement and team activities. The Level 1 Instructor is limited in their remit to sheltered waters in a small area.
Level 2 Instructor	Teach aspects of paddling skills to enable the paddler to smoothly progress from the static environment to a more dynamic sport specific environment. The Level 2 Instructor can lead journeys, assess paddlers for the level 1 and 2 skills awards, run and assess the SOT flatwater skills award and run RSR 1 courses.
Level 3 Instructor	Coaches & Instructs paddlers to perform in a dynamic environment smoothing the transition from a static environment. Level 3 Instructors can assess levels 1 to 3 skills, run, and assess the SOT river skills, and sea skills awards. Run RSR 1 and 2 courses as well as teach in the dynamic environment.
Level 4 Instructor	Develops individual paddlers to perform at an advanced level through focused observation, critical analysis, and supportive, concise feedback. The Level 4 Instructor operates in an advanced dynamic environment, can assess levels 1 through to 4, can run RSR 1 to 3 courses as well as Coastal Navigation courses if a level 4 sea kayaking instructor.
Level 5 Instructor	An ambassador for the sport and adapts instructing/coaching methodologies to enable the paddler to perform to their best ability. This can involve introducing teaching tactics from other walks of life to empower the learner to perform. The Level 5 instructor can run level 5 skills training courses and assessments as well as providing support to up and coming instructors/paddlers.

The Stand-Up Paddleboard Instructor

Existing outside of the five level Instructor Awards Scheme is the Flatwater SUP Instructor. Though a stand-alone instructor pathway has been designed and ratified, to date, only assimilation courses from level 2 kayak instructor have been run. The Flatwater SUP Instructor can run and assess both Intro to SUP and Flatwater SUP awards.

The Coach Awards

Work has commenced on the development of Coach Awards. At the time of this review a consultation process had commenced with stakeholders and members in relation to its content. Further information will be communicated to the paddling community as this area develops.



Recommendations, Conclusions and Actions



This section of the review combines the recommendations, conclusions, and requirements in a list of thirteen recommendations and associated actions.

1. Recommendation: Highlight & Enhance the Junior Pathway

The Junior Pathway that currently exists within the Awards Scheme should be highlighted, and efforts should be made to continue to increase junior participation within the awards. Efforts should be made in the future to engage juniors in any further review of the awards to ensure that this portion (25%) of the membership is considered in any changes that are made to the award.

Actions

1.1 Highlighting of the awards that are available to juniors.

1.2 Develop further pathways for juniors to take part in the Awards Scheme, including initiatives and bespoke programmes to help junior participation in all areas of paddlesports.

1.3 Actively seek out junior involvement in any future review of the awards.

2. Recommendation: Future Changes to Reflect and Address Stakeholder and Partner Organisations

Any, and all actions for change proposed by this awards review must reflect and appropriately address all of the stakeholders and partner organisations that are involved in the Canoeing Ireland Awards Scheme.

Actions

2.1 Changes should be made to assist clubs in engaging with the Awards Scheme.

2.2 Considerations should be given to the educational sector in any and all changes that are to be made to the Awards Scheme.

2.3 Measures should focus on reduction of cost and reduction in requirements without a reduction in standards or negatively affecting other sectors/stakeholders.

3. Recommendation: Changes Reflect Best Practice and Modern Techniques

Changes to the award should be made to better reflect best practice and update the awards to reflect modern techniques.

Actions

3.1 Adaptation of the awards to more accurately reflect the different aspects of the various disciplines should be made. Especially in the area of Sea Kayaking and Open Canoeing.

3.2 Have a more diverse approach to the awards, ensuring that all disciplines are equally developed.

4. Recommendation: Development of Coaching

Awards

Development of the coaching awards system. The lack of a roll out of the Coaching Awards may have seen the awards misrepresented in the review. It is the conclusion of this review that there has not been a sufficient amount of coach courses organised to provide reliable information to form part of this review.

Actions

- 4.1** Continue to redevelop and deploy coaching awards.
- 4.2** Strategically target and focus on clubs that can facilitate the coach awards.
- 4.3** Target key competitive members of the of the sport who would be crucial in providing the coaching awards.
- 4.4** Identify members of the competitive paddling community to go through the Sport Ireland Coach Developer training.

5. Recommendation: Resource Strategically Important Courses

Canoeing Ireland should focus on running more courses. In particular courses that are deemed difficult to run or not commercially viable. These courses may have strategic importance to the awards and the paddling community. It is important that the current Awards Scheme is fully functional with all aspects of the awards available to the paddling community.

Actions

- 5.1** The Canoeing Ireland Training and Development Officer to develop a strategy to run all aspects of the awards.
- 5.2** To develop a cohort of current instructors and instructor developers that can deliver all aspects of the award.
- 5.3** To review delivery strategies that would make most frequently requested courses easier to run.
- 5.4** To develop resources where necessary to facilitate the running of the awards.
- 5.5** To focus on the awards that are most needed and to also provide sustainable awards progression for the paddling community.

6. Recommendation: Administration Process of Awards Scheme

Review administration structures to improve rating of “Fair” across all aspects of the awards administration.

Actions

- 6.1** Focus on areas of awards administration that interact with the paddling community.
- 6.2** Update and review areas such as the awards section on the website.
- 6.3** Design methods to automate and streamline administration resources such as certificate processing and instructor validation.

7.Recommendation: Communications with members

Continued improvement in communications between Canoeing Ireland and the paddling Community around the areas of awards.

Actions

7.1 Improvement of the Awards Scheme section on the website.

7.2 Development of a yearly calendar of courses running in relation to the awards and qualifications. This requires the appropriate information to be communicated to Canoeing Ireland by those running said courses.

7.3 A More integrated and timely approach to communication of the Awards Scheme on social media and online messaging. This will aim to encourage a two-way communication network inviting communications from all users of the Awards Scheme.

7.4 Development of digital resources and information packs for the Awards Scheme users.

7.5 Promotion of affiliated providers to give better representation of the awards scheme delivery locations and regularity of courses running.

8. Recommendation: Revalidation & CPD System

Full alignment with recommendations from Sport Ireland Coaching by introducing a system of revalidation and continuous professional development (CPD) for the instructor/coach awards with the awards scheme.

Actions

8.1 Develop a programme of CPD/ workshops for instructors and the wider paddling community.

8.2 Develop the supporting administration and database structure to manage a revalidation system for instructors.

8.3 Develop a process for the recognition of prior learning and develop alternative pathways for progression within the Awards Scheme.

9. Recommendation: Mentoring Processes within Awards Scheme

Develop a mentoring process for the awards scheme that reflects the suggestions made in the questionnaire section of the review.

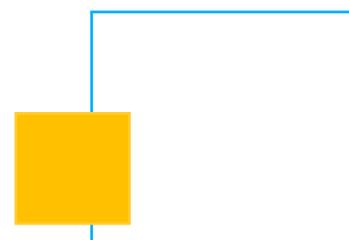
Actions

9.1 Develop workshops and CPD opportunities around mentoring and reflective practice.

9.2 Develop support strategies for mentoring and reflective practice.,

9.3 Develop and expand the role of ambassadors as initiated by the “Bridge the Gap” programme.

9.4 Develop online and practical solutions to mentoring.



10. Recommendation: Revisions of Logbook Process and Format

Revision of the logbook process to make it more reflective of the needs of the participants.

Actions

- 10.1 Investigate the logbook process.
- 10.2 Investigate the production of a logbook for life.
- 10.3 Reduction of cost and redefining of the fees for the logbook.
- 10.4 Investigation into the transition towards a digital logbook or app-based management system.

11. Recommendation: Address Gaps between Awards

Introduce several small changes across the Awards Scheme to address the gaps and “big jumps” between the skills and instructor levels on the Awards Scheme.

Actions

- 11.1 Make level 2 skills award a peer group award.
- 11.2 Explicitly state the general aims of each award.
- 11.3 Make level three skills awards a peer group qualification.
- 11.4 Make communication of the awards, their requirements, and their scope clearer.
- 11.5 Introduce additional training opportunities to help people in their achievement of the awards.
- 11.6 Development of sea safety and/or open water safety award for sea kayakers and open canoeists.

12. Recommendation: Develop Additional Resources

Development of a wide range of additional resources to accommodate regular and unrestricted access to educational and progressive teaching resources.

Actions

- 12.1 Develop digital resources with a focus on video education.
- 12.2 Establish links and licensing agreements where necessary to use quality online resources.
- 12.3 Update instructor training manual and make it available online.
- 12.4 Create links to the wider coaching world through sharing of online coaching resources.
- 12.5 Ensure that all conferences and workshops be recorded where possible for uploading to a digital format.



13. Recommendation: Award Scheme Review

Every 5 Years

Although not highlighted in the review or in a particular part of the questionnaire, it would be the recommendation of this report that the Award Scheme be reviewed in its entirety every 5 years. This should be linked to the development strategy of the organisation. This Awards Scheme Review should map future developments and monitor progress on the recommendations stated within this review document. Membership and relevant stakeholders should be invited to engage with the awards review periodically.

Actions

13.1 Development of a review process that can be repeated every five years to coincide with the Canoeing Ireland's strategic planning.

13.2 Provide and promote frequent engagement with the membership and relevant stakeholders regarding the Awards Scheme

13.3 Development of an Awards Scheme 'map' or framework that aligns future development



Conclusion

The contents of this report are the product of an extensive consultation process. This report will form the basis for future development of the Awards Scheme. This work will be aligned with the strategic goals outlined in the Canoeing Ireland Strategic Plan 2021-2023. Specific focus will be given to supporting the advancement of club volunteer instructors through additional resourcing. To optimise the work associated with this review, activities will be benchmarked against best practice as various actions are completed. Further reviews will be carried out biennially.

Canoeing Ireland would like to thank everyone who contributed to this review. Canoeing Ireland would like to acknowledge Sport Ireland Coaching for their continued support, collaboration, and expertise.

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Awards Scheme Review
2020