



Kingston Kayak Club

Canoe Polo Training Sessions

Safety and Deployment Approach

1. Purpose

This document describes Kingston Kayak Club's approach to the safe organisation, facilitation and supervision of its regular canoe polo training sessions.

The Club operates two regular canoe polo sessions:

- **Monday:** Indoor swimming pool.
- **Tuesday:** Outdoor swimming pool.

These sessions generally consist of experienced paddlers undertaking canoe polo practice, training games and match play.

Unlike the Club's general paddlesport coaching sessions, canoe polo training is not normally organised around the formal instruction or coaching of individuals.

The sessions are therefore classified as **informal paddlesport activity**, in accordance with Paddle UK's Standards for Deployment Glossary.

This document should be read alongside the Club's relevant risk assessments, safeguarding arrangements, emergency procedures and the operating requirements of Hull Culture and Leisure (HCAL).

2. Classification of Activity

Paddle UK defines informal paddlesport activity as activity within clubs and disciplines where there is no specific focus on formal instruction, coaching or leading.

This definition is appropriate to the Club's regular canoe polo sessions because:

- Participants normally possess the skills and experience necessary to participate in canoe polo.
- Training consists primarily of games, match practice and player-led activities.
- No individual is routinely appointed to deliver structured coaching.
- Players may organise teams, discuss tactics and provide informal feedback to one another.

- Participants take responsibility for their own paddling and participation within the Club's agreed safety arrangements.

The absence of formal coaching does not remove the Club's responsibility to provide a safe environment.

The Club must maintain appropriate safeguarding and first-aid provision, together with suitable safety training and competency checks for individuals facilitating the activity.

Where a session is specifically arranged to deliver formal coaching or instruction, the relevant Paddle UK requirements for formal coaching will apply.

3. Overall Responsibility

Kingston Kayak Club, acting through its Committee and agreed safety framework, is the deployer for canoe polo activity.

The Club is responsible for ensuring that:

- Appropriate risk assessments and operating procedures are in place.
- Participants are competent to undertake the planned activity.
- Individuals facilitating the session are appropriately experienced and competent.
- Suitable safeguarding arrangements are maintained.
- Adequate first-aid and emergency provision is available.
- HCAL's requirements for safe use of the swimming pool are met.

For each canoe polo session, the Club will identify a **Session Lead / Facilitator**.

The Session Lead is responsible for the practical organisation and safe conduct of the session within the Club's agreed safety framework.

The Session Lead is not automatically acting as a formally deployed coach merely because they have responsibility for organising the activity.

4. Session Staffing and Safety Roles

Each canoe polo session will operate with three identifiable functions.

4.1 Session Lead / Facilitator

The Session Lead is responsible for:

- Coordinating the session and organising participating paddlers.
- Ensuring that participant numbers remain within the agreed maximum.
- Assessing whether the intended activity is appropriate for the participants.

- Organising teams, games and rotations.
- Maintaining appropriate behaviour and discipline.
- Ensuring that participants comply with the Club's safety rules.
- Communicating with the poolside safety personnel.
- Modifying or stopping activity where necessary.

The Session Lead must be competent to facilitate canoe polo activity within the relevant pool environment.

A formal coaching qualification is not automatically required where the individual is facilitating informal paddlesport activity rather than delivering formal coaching.

The Club will ensure that the Session Lead has received appropriate site-specific training and has demonstrated competence in the relevant safety procedures.

4.2 Qualified Poolside Coach / Lifeguard

In accordance with HCAL's requirements, a suitably qualified coach will be positioned poolside to undertake the required coach/lifeguard function.

This person must hold the qualifications and meet the competency requirements accepted by HCAL for this role.

Their primary responsibility is the safety of participants within the pool.

Their duties include:

- Monitoring the safety of paddlers.
- Identifying participants experiencing difficulty.
- Responding to capsizes, injuries or other incidents requiring intervention.
- Supporting or implementing emergency procedures.
- Liaising with the Pool Controller.
- Ensuring appropriate action is taken where an activity becomes unsafe.

The poolside coach/lifeguard's safety responsibilities take priority over any other involvement in the session.

This individual is not required to deliver formal canoe polo coaching.

Where appropriate, the person fulfilling this role may also be the named Session Lead, provided that doing so does not interfere with their poolside safety responsibilities.

4.3 Pool Controller

A separate Pool Controller will be positioned poolside in accordance with HCAL's operating requirements.

The Pool Controller provides whole-pool observation from an elevated or otherwise suitable position.

Their responsibilities include:

- Maintaining observation of the pool and participants.
- Identifying paddlers who appear to be experiencing difficulty.
- Identifying unsafe behaviour or developing incidents.
- Alerting the poolside coach/lifeguard to concerns.
- Supporting the implementation of emergency procedures.

The Pool Controller is not required to provide paddlesport coaching.

The Pool Controller's observation role must not be compromised by other duties which interfere with effective supervision of the pool.

5. Participant Numbers and Capacity

Canoe polo sessions will accommodate a maximum of **20 paddlers on the water**, subject to the Session Lead being satisfied that the available safety arrangements remain appropriate.

Paddle UK's Environmental Definitions and Deployment Guidance suggests a coach-to-participant ratio of 1:8 for solo craft in Very Sheltered Water.

However, this ratio is guidance for formal instructing, coaching and leading activity.

The Club's regular canoe polo sessions are classified as informal paddlesport activity and are not organised on the basis of individual coaching groups.

The Club will therefore determine suitable participant numbers through its documented risk assessment and safety arrangements rather than applying a formal coaching ratio automatically.

In determining whether 20 paddlers can safely participate, consideration will be given to:

- Pool dimensions and the available playing area.
- Participant age, competence and experience.
- The intensity and nature of the planned activity.
- Collision and contact risks associated with canoe polo.
- Visibility across the playing area.
- The ability of the poolside coach/lifeguard to respond to incidents.
- The effectiveness of the Pool Controller arrangements.
- The availability of suitable rescue and emergency equipment.
- HCAL's venue-specific conditions and requirements.

The maximum of 20 paddlers does not represent an automatic entitlement to participate where conditions or available safety resources make this inappropriate.

The Session Lead may reduce participant numbers or modify the activity where necessary.

6. Participant Competence

Canoe polo is a specialist paddlesport discipline involving close contact between players, rapid manoeuvring, ball handling and the possibility of collisions or capsizes.

Participants must therefore be competent to take part in the activities being undertaken.

The Club will establish appropriate entry requirements for canoe polo sessions, taking account of each participant's experience and ability.

Competence will include consideration of:

- Basic control and manoeuvring of a canoe polo kayak.
- Ability to exit a capsized kayak safely.
- Confidence in the pool environment.
- Understanding of canoe polo contact and safety rules.
- Ability to follow instructions and respond to safety directions.
- Appropriate awareness of other paddlers.

An Eskimo roll is not automatically required for participation, provided that the participant has suitable capsize and self-rescue competence and the Club's safety assessment supports their participation.

New or less experienced participants may be required to undertake an assessment or induction before joining normal training games.

Where individuals need structured instruction to develop the necessary skills, this should be arranged through an appropriately deployed coach.

7. Training and Session Organisation

Canoe polo sessions will normally consist of player-led training, practice games and match play.

The Session Lead may:

- Divide participants into teams.
- Organise the playing area.
- Establish match durations.
- Coordinate substitutions and rotations.

- Ensure that games are conducted safely.
- Modify the format where player numbers or abilities require it.

Participants may discuss tactics, provide informal advice and contribute to the organisation of activities.

Such interaction does not automatically constitute formal coaching.

However, where an individual takes responsibility for delivering structured instruction, demonstrations, planned skill development or systematic coaching feedback, the Club will consider whether that activity constitutes formal coaching.

Where formal coaching is being delivered, the individual responsible must meet the appropriate Standards for Deployment requirements.

8. Behaviour and Discipline

The Session Lead is responsible for maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour during canoe polo activity.

All participants must:

- Follow the Club's rules and safety arrangements.
- Comply with the agreed canoe polo rules.
- Show appropriate consideration for other participants.
- Avoid deliberate or reckless unsafe contact.
- Respond promptly to instructions to stop play.
- Respect the decisions of the Session Lead and safety personnel.

The Session Lead has authority to:

- Address inappropriate or unsafe behaviour.
- Issue warnings.
- Require a participant to modify their behaviour.
- Temporarily remove a participant from the water.
- Exclude a participant from the remainder of the session where their behaviour cannot be managed safely.
- Refer serious or repeated concerns to the Club Committee or Welfare Officer.

The poolside coach/lifeguard and Pool Controller may also require activity to stop immediately where safety concerns arise.

The Session Lead's authority relates to the safe conduct of the session. Formal disciplinary decisions beyond the session remain the responsibility of the Club Committee.

9. Safeguarding

The Club will maintain appropriate safeguarding arrangements for all canoe polo sessions.

Where children or young people participate, the Club will ensure that safeguarding arrangements are suitable for their age, circumstances and level of independence.

The Session Lead and other individuals undertaking designated responsibilities must have appropriate safeguarding awareness or training relevant to their role.

Where a role constitutes regulated activity, the Club will ensure that the appropriate criminal record checks are undertaken in accordance with Paddle UK's requirements and relevant legislation.

Safeguarding concerns must be reported through the Club's established safeguarding procedures.

10. First Aid and Emergency Arrangements

Appropriate first-aid provision must be available for every canoe polo session.

The Club will operate within HCAL's venue-specific emergency procedures, including arrangements for contacting lifeguards, first-aid personnel and emergency services.

The Club's procedures will address:

- Capsized or distressed paddlers.
- Entrapment or difficulty exiting a kayak.
- Collisions and suspected head or neck injuries.
- Injuries caused by paddles, balls, goals or other equipment.
- Emergency evacuation of the pool.
- Removal of an injured participant from the water.
- Contacting emergency services.
- Recording and reporting incidents.

The Session Lead, poolside coach/lifeguard and Pool Controller must understand their respective responsibilities in an emergency.

Where an emergency occurs, the safety response will take priority over continuation of the training session.

11. Indoor Pool – Monday Sessions

Monday canoe polo training takes place at the Club's indoor swimming pool venue.

The Club will operate in accordance with HCAL's requirements for indoor pool use.

The session will have:

- A named Session Lead / Facilitator.
- A suitably qualified poolside coach/lifeguard.
- A separate Pool Controller.
- Appropriate first-aid and safeguarding provision.
- A maximum of 20 paddlers, subject to the agreed safety arrangements.

The enclosed pool environment is classified by British Canoeing Awarding Body as Very Sheltered Water.

The Club will ensure that participant numbers, equipment, pool layout and the nature of the games remain consistent with its risk assessment and HCAL's requirements.

12. Outdoor Pool – Tuesday Sessions

Tuesday canoe polo training takes place at the Club's outdoor swimming pool venue.

The Club will maintain the same underlying approach to the organisation and facilitation of informal canoe polo activity.

The session will have:

- A named Session Lead / Facilitator.
- A suitably qualified poolside coach/lifeguard.
- A separate Pool Controller.
- Appropriate first-aid and safeguarding provision.
- A maximum of 20 paddlers, subject to the agreed safety arrangements.

The outdoor environment introduces additional considerations, including:

- Wind and weather conditions.
- Water and air temperature.
- Visibility and lighting.
- Access and egress.
- Weather-related hazards.
- The effect of environmental conditions on participant safety and emergency response.

The applicable environmental classification will be confirmed through the outdoor venue's risk assessment.

The Session Lead and poolside safety personnel will assess conditions and may modify, postpone or cancel the session where necessary.

13. Equipment and Playing Area

The Club will ensure that canoe polo equipment and the playing environment are suitable for the activities undertaken.

This will include consideration of:

- Canoe polo kayaks and their condition.
- Appropriate buoyancy aids.
- Helmets and faceguards.
- Paddles and their condition.
- Kayak bumpers and other protective fittings.
- Goals and goal supports.
- The positioning of equipment relative to the poolside.
- Safe access and egress.

Defective or unsuitable equipment must not be used.

Participants must wear protective equipment appropriate to canoe polo activity and comply with the Club's equipment requirements.

14. Dynamic Management of Sessions

The Session Lead may alter or stop the session at any time where necessary to maintain safety.

This may include:

- Changing team composition.
- Reducing the number of active players.
- Introducing additional substitutions.
- Modifying the intensity or format of games.
- Separating participants with significantly different abilities.
- Removing unsafe equipment.
- Stopping unsafe play.
- Removing participants whose behaviour creates unacceptable risk.
- Suspending or cancelling activity.

The poolside coach/lifeguard and Pool Controller retain the authority to initiate an immediate safety intervention in accordance with the venue's emergency arrangements.

The Session Lead must cooperate with these interventions and ensure that play does not resume until it is safe to do so.

15. Key Operating Principles

Kingston Kayak Club will operate regular canoe polo training sessions according to the following principles:

1. Regular player-led canoe polo training is classified as informal paddlesport activity rather than formal coaching.
2. Kingston Kayak Club remains the deployer and retains responsibility for the safety framework.
3. A named Session Lead / Facilitator will coordinate each session.
4. A suitably qualified poolside coach/lifeguard will undertake the safety role required by HCAL.
5. A separate Pool Controller will provide whole-pool observation.
6. Appropriate first-aid and safeguarding arrangements will be maintained.
7. Session facilitators will have appropriate safety training and documented competence.
8. A maximum of 20 paddlers may participate where the risk assessment and venue arrangements support that number.
9. Formal coaching requirements will apply where structured coaching or instruction is delivered.
10. Safety personnel and the Session Lead have authority to stop or modify activity where required.
11. Indoor and outdoor sessions will operate in accordance with their respective risk assessments and HCAL operating requirements.

16. Document Governance

Deployer: Kingston Kayak Club Committee

Document owner: Club Committee / Safety Officer

Approval: Club Committee

Review frequency: Annually or following a significant change in activity, venue requirements, guidance or relevant incidents.

Supporting Documents

- Paddle UK – Standards for Deployment Policy for Clubs and National Association Committees (January 2026).
- Paddle UK – Standards for Deployment Glossary and Useful Links.
- British Canoeing Awarding Body – Environmental Definitions and Deployment Guidance (April 2025).
- Kingston Kayak Club – Indoor Pool Coaching and Deployment Approach.
- Kingston Kayak Club – Outdoor Pool Coaching and Deployment Approach.
- Relevant Kingston Kayak Club risk assessments and emergency procedures.
- HCAL venue operating requirements.