

ISAF Recognized Training - Accreditation Report



FFV National Training Programme – Dinghy, Multihull Board and Keelboat.



Sylvie Lasseaux, Phillipe DelHaye, Andy Jeffrey, Olivier Bovyn, Jean-Pierre Champion, Pierre le Boucher, Vincent Garos.

Introduction

Following an application from the Federation Francaise a Voile (FFV) for recognition of the French Learn to Sail Training Programme, an inspection was carried out from 7 to 10 September 2011.

The inspection included a review of the training programme and its management at the FFV offices in Paris followed by visits to three sailing schools and the National Sailing School in Brittany.

Although it was only possible to observe a small amount of training taking place, there was sufficient consistency in the facilities and resources at each of the sites visited to be able to conclude that the training programme is well embedded in the sailing schools.

1 National Programme Management Structure

1.1 National Training Manager

The permanent, full time Technical Officer with responsibility for training and development is Sylvie Lasseaux. She has held this position for over ten years and has many years experience in the delivery of practical training and youth development in sailing.

Sylvie reports directly to Jean Kerhoas who is the Vice President of the FFV, member of the Executive Committee as the Director of the Development Department and signatory to the application for accreditation.

1.2 Programme Management Structure

The FFV has evolved from over a hundred years of recreational sailing in France. Since 1985 there has been a deliberate drive to make sailing available to everyone rather than being an exclusive activity. The Federation is managed by a board that meets four times per annum. The Executive Committee meets more frequently, on roughly a monthly basis.

The Development Department under the Direction of Jean Kerhoas, is responsible for the development and administration of the training programme. In addition to Sylvie Lasseaux, as the permanent Technical Officer, the Department is supported by a group of ten people, with a range of relevant experience, who contribute to the process.

Bi-annual meetings are held to which Technical Managers from selected schools are invited to discuss the delivery and development of the national programme. These meetings are complimented by an annual four day national development meeting. Delegates at the latter are selected by their Regional Committee. The result of the contributions made by representatives, both invited by the FFV and selected from the Regions, creates a good platform for feedback and response within the management structure.

1.3 Systems, data and Records

Records are maintained of all of the accredited sailing schools, the majority of which are part of or directly linked to a sailing club. Such records include the outcome of quality audits. The measurement of the level of participation in the sport is by way of individual licences issued by the FFV, through the network of sailing clubs, to everyone who is a member of an affiliated sailing club.

Instructor qualifications and records are maintained by the schools and displayed prominently in accordance with national regulations.

2 Accredited Training Centres

2.1 Conditions for Accreditation

Conditions for accreditation are readily available from the FFV and can be obtained directly from their comprehensive web site.

Before registering as a sailing school, it is necessary to comply with a number of statutory regulations imposed by the Ministry for Sport, Ministry for Education and the local governmental Region and Department. These combine to ensure that an aspirant organisation complies with national standards with respect to public protection. Further requirements imposed by the FFV are inspected as described in paragraph 2.8.

2.2 Administration

The accreditation process is administered by the FFV. Individual schools are responsible for their operational administration, which naturally depends upon the scale of their operation and will also be required to comply with local Regional or Departmental regulations.

2.3 Boats Used

The craft used at each school varies. However, the Optimist appears to be widely accepted as the most suitable craft for the introduction of younger children. As they progress, there a number of options, many of French origin, all of which are suited to the purpose. At each of the schools visited, the intention to replace craft on a regular basis was both expressed and evident.

There are a number of more advanced modern dinghies and catamarans used throughout the schools that provide for both older participants and wider progressions.

A good range of modern windsurfers with an appropriate range of rig sizes was also evident at each site visited.

2.4 Training Equipment and Shore Side Facilities

All of the locations visited provided an appropriate range of personal protective equipment including buoyancy aids. Although the condition of some of the equipment was 'well used', it appeared to be fit for purpose.

Suitable shore side training facilities and resources were available at each location. As the operation of such facilities is governed by both national and local government regulations, maintenance of appropriate levels of service standards is mandatory.

Posters promoting the competence criteria for each level of the training scheme and signage confirming accreditation with the FFV were prominently displayed at each location.

2.5 Tuition System

There are two parallel and complementary schemes that provide for the delivery of progressive sail training. These are personal competence awards that offer five levels of 'qualification' in each of the four available disciplines and a corresponding four levels of instructor qualifications.

The FFV requires accredited schools to promote the progressive schemes through conspicuous advertising. A 'Passport' is given to students in which they can both record their progress and see the further options available. A separate document lists the criteria for achievement of each of the awards and would allow an instructor to sign off completion of individual components. The record of training is therefore transportable between accredited training schools.

Instructors may be locally qualified as Assistant Instructors to work alongside Federal Instructors who, in turn, are supervised by a nationally qualified Technical Manager. The majority of the latter are salaried and therefore required, by law, to hold a qualification issued by the Ministry for Sport.

2.6 Safety Operations

Each of the schools visited had a different approach to the detailed operation of their facilities. However in the context of safety, staffing and programme delivery there was a consistent theme, which was in keeping with the descriptions detailed on the FFV web site, which has links to individual school web pages, and the many publications also produced by the FFV.

2.7 Child Protection

Although there is no formal child protection policy, under the observed school based operations, this is not seen to be a problem. Many of the instructors are young people who have learned to sail at the same school at which they teach. Consequently they and their families are well known to the management of the school.

2.8 Centre Inspection System

The maintenance of standards is achieved through a system of audits that are in compliance with the French Association for Normalisation (AFNOR) standards. These are carried out by approximately forty inspectors who are trained by the FFV in order to be able to apply the AFNOR standards to the sailing school environment.

For a new school, it is expected that self regulation to the AFNOR standards is applied during set up. In the following year, the school will be formally inspected. Thereafter, schools are usually inspected every three years. The decision regarding which schools to inspect is devolved to Regional Committees.

The audit inspection is carried out by two inspectors and usually lasts for most of a day. Reports are reviewed at both Regional and FFV levels. Each of the schools visited had received an audit within the last three years and was both aware of and had acted upon the consequent action plans.

3 Safety Guidelines and Procedures

3.1 Safety Equipment

Appropriate safety equipment was seen to be available, and in use, throughout the inspection. At each of the schools visited a good range of appropriately sized wetsuits, waterproofs and CE marked buoyancy aids was available for client use.

3.2 Knowledge and Skills of Instructor Application

The quality of instruction is maintained by a well developed instructor training scheme. Many instructors have been students at the schools where they work and are well known by the Technical Manager who has responsibility for the safety as well as the quality of delivery.

The progressive nature and content of the instructor qualifications, which is described in more detail in Paragraph 4.1, ensures that those responsible for teaching are adequately trained and supervised.

3.3 Risk Awareness and Management

Each of the schools has an almost unique operating environment with regard to their size, location and access to training areas. This was particularly the case at the schools visited during the inspection, each of which had developed appropriate safe systems of working that were well suited to their specific environment.

3.4 Operating Procedures

Each school has its own operating procedures. From observation of the limited practical activity witnessed and the layout of each school, there is a consistency of approach that is born from experience and has been adapted to suit the local environment.

3.5 Local Operating Procedures

Covered under 3.4.

3.6 Accident and First Aid Training

The provision of general First Aid training in France is very limited. Reliance is placed upon professional emergency services to provide an appropriate response to an incident. However, the specific hazards associated with the sailing environment and how to deal with the immediacy of potential accidents is covered during instructor training.

3.7 Major Incident Plan

A major incident would elicit a response from the emergency services and the subsequent actions would be the responsibility of national organisations rather than the schools.

3.8 Duty of Care Guidelines

The national culture places a duty of care upon the provider of any service and the degree of responsibility both observed and discussed throughout the inspection indicated that this extends into the delivery of the sailing programme.

There is an established complaints procedure, which is initially to the school involved and, if the matter is not resolved, then directly to the FFV. If involved, the FFV works with both the school and the Regional Committee to find an equitable solution. If the FFV finds in favour of the complainant, then the Federation will bear the financial cost of any refund of fees. There are very few, less than ten, complaints that reach the FFV each year.

4 Instructors

4.1 Instructor Structure and Qualifications

There are four categories of instructor. Before becoming an instructor, the candidate is required to hold competence and complete training as follows -

Assistant Instructor – Certificate of Professional Qualification issued by the FFV; works under the direct supervision of a higher level instructor; required to be over sixteen years old and have personal competence at Level 4 in the relevant discipline. An FFV log and task book is issued to guide the candidate through the process.

Instructor (Federal) – Diploma issued by the FFV; works under the direction of a Technical Manager who remains responsible for the safety and quality of delivery; required to be over sixteen years old, have personal competence at Level 5 in the relevant discipline, have received first aid training and hold a Carte de MÉR for operating powerboats. An FFV log and task book guides the candidate through the process, which includes two weeks of formal training followed by a further two weeks of practical, supervised and assessed training. The Federal Instructor can teach up to all Levels within their discipline.

Regional Trainer (Formateur) – professional qualification issued by the Ministry of Sport through the Region. Applicants are required to have three years experience as an Instructor, have personal competence at Level 4 in three disciplines, Level 5 in one discipline and the competence to enter competition at national levels. After their selection interview, candidates are given a personal training plan that makes allowance for previous experience and relevant transferrable training. Preparation for the formal assessment requires approximately 800 hours of work and is expected to take two years but must be completed within three years. The assessment is conducted by a jury of six people, which includes a government inspector allocated from the Ministry for Sport. The Regional Formateur is the minimum qualification for an individual to be appointed as the Technical Manager of a sailing school with responsibility for supervising training activities.

National Trainer (Formateur) – a very small number of Regional trainers are selected for further training to the higher level of National Trainer. This training is carried out by the National Sailing School either in Quiberon or Antibes.

4.2 Safety Boat Training

In order to operate a powerboat in France, a personal licence, issued by the Ministry for Transport is required. Although theoretical training is available on the internet or may be combined with practical training at some sailing schools, a formal examination is carried out by an examiner nominated by the Ministry for Transport. Consequently, the FFV currently has little involvement in the training of safety boat operators.

During discussion with some of the schools visited, it became apparent that a degree of informal additional training in the use rather than operation of powerboats takes place. The National Sailing School is currently investigating options for gaining Ministerial approval to provide powerboat training specific to the requirements of the sailing school environment.

4.3 Who is Taught by Whom

Covered under 2.5 and 4.1.

4.4 Who Teaches What

Covered under 2.5 and 4.1.

4.5 Techniques for Instruction

Discussion with both the FFV and the staff at the schools visited indicate that the techniques for instruction are well developed and fit for purpose. The various annual forums allow ample opportunity for feedback and review of FFV led initiatives in this area. The available resources, and particularly the pack given to aspirant instructors, promote good practice.

Informal discussion revealed that consideration is being given to providing specific training in the effective use of powerboats as a teaching platform, which is strongly recommended.

4.6 Successful Teaching Methods

Although the opportunity to observe and assess individual competence did not arise during the inspection, the anecdotal evidence suggested that the methods and resources appeared to be effective.

The young people who had attended their first session at one school, which comprised an introduction to personal equipment and a swimming test in uninspiring weather conditions, were all very enthusiastically looking forward to their next session, which indicated a good level of rapport created by the instructors.

5 The Syllabus

5.1 The Syllabus

The syllabus has been completely updated within the last five years. Consideration was given to the factors that encourage young people to remain engaged with sailing after their first experience. In recognition of individual preferences, the syllabi at each level encourage the development of skills that will enable the successful sailor to engage in “Sensation”, “Performance” or “Exploration”.

Details of the learning outcomes for each element of the syllabus are readily available on the FFV web site and in the Progress Chart that compliments the personal “Certification” booklet, in which achievement of the separate Levels is recorded and verified. All schools are required to display, in public places, the FFV provided material that clearly explains the progressive nature of the training scheme.

5.2 Structure

There are five levels of competence in each of four disciplines. These are progressive and adequate performance is assessed before the Level is awarded. The structure is such that components can be ‘signed off’, which can encourage further participation. The four disciplines are –

- Dinghy
- Sail Board
- Catamaran
- Cruising Boat

The five levels of competence are –

Level 1 – “Advance under sail on the course selected and supervised by the instructor”.

Level 2 – “Attain any part of a designated area on a course selected and supervised by the instructor”.

Level 3 – “Sail freely in supervised navigational zones”.

Level 4 – “Navigate autonomously, able to choose your own practice zone”.

Level 5 – “Navigate expertly and responsibly”.

Linked to attainment of the levels of competence are the associated standards of competition for which the individual is considered to be competent to enter.

5.3 Content

The content of the syllabi is appropriate to each Level. The topics to be covered at each Level are divided into three categories which are, “Technical Skills”, “Safety” and “Marine Awareness – Environment”

6 Participant Standards Achieved

6.1 Participant Assessment

Formal assessments are carried out to confirm that the required standards have been achieved for each of the five levels in the training scheme. Components of each level can also be ‘signed off’, if completed satisfactorily, which provides a degree of portability to the Passport, or progress chart, allowing the individual to attend any school to continue their learning.

7 Communication

7.1 Communication

The FFV has a very comprehensive web site that is well structured and easy to navigate. This is supported by a range of printed documents in which there is a high level of consistency. As most of the current range of documents has been recently upgraded, there is no current plan to review the products.

The communications appear to be effective as exemplified by the implementation of the new training scheme, which was evident at all of the schools visited during the inspection.

8 Sustainability

8.1 Contributory Factors

A number of factors contribute to the sustainability of the work of the FFV in making the sport accessible to a wider audience. The most significant of these are the sponsorship links that have been established with Orange, Adidas and Banque Populaire all of which are very evident in both the vibrant publications produced by the FFV and at the schools visited.

Less obvious, but of significant importance, are the integration of the introduction to sailing into education programmes, particularly in the Brittany Region, and the work done by the FFV to design and produce sails for use by schools. The sails that have been developed

under the guidance of the FFV are cheaper, more durable and better suited to the task of basic sailing than some of the original equipment supplied manufacturers.

Recommendation

The FFV has a clearly defined and transparent structure that has evolved over a period of many years. It has a willingness to change to meet the requirements of the people for whom it is intended to serve, which is evidenced by the recent complete revision of the training programme and materials. The organisation provides a training scheme that is well suited to the French physical and cultural environment and provides a focal point for youth sailing in France. In the context of the Connect to Sailing initiative, it is a working example of a very successful organisation.

It is recommended that the FFV should be awarded full ISAF Accreditation as the organisation responsible for the French National Sail Training Programme.

Acknowledgement

The support, accommodating hospitality and patience in translating of both Sylvie Lasseaux and Philippe Delhaye throughout the review was exemplary. As a Technical Officer, Philippe has made a significant contribution to the development of many of the training resources currently available. The enthusiasm of both Sylvie and Philippe for the development of sailing in France equips them well to be the custodians of that responsibility.

Andy Jeffrey
ISAF Inspector
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