

ISAF Recognized Training - Accreditation Report

Omani National Sail Training Programme



Introduction

Following an application from Oman Sail for recognition of the Omani National Sailing Scheme an inspection was carried out from 10 to 14 November 2011.

The inspection included a review of the training programme management at the Oman Sail headquarters in Muscat, and visits to the two sailing schools, at Marina Bandar Al Rowdha and Musannah, where training programmes were taking place.

Social and Economic Background

The population of Oman is a little over three million people. Of these, approximately two and a quarter million are Omani nationals. The country has a maritime history but this has been relatively dormant for around a century as the principle revenue has derived from oil production.

The country is aware that oil revenue has a finite lifespan and is now committed to the development of tourism. With an inhospitable mountainous and arid inland terrain, the majority of the population lives on the coastal regions and hence a focus on maritime tourism is evident.

The country is making significant investment in marine facilities and recreational use of the sea. Although sailing is generally regarded as a sport with significant commonality between elite competition and large scale recreational sailing, the emergence of Oman Sail is linked to the Ministry of Tourism as part of the national policies for growth in recreational activity.

1 National Programme Management Structure

1.1 Director of Sailing Development

Oman Sail is governed by a Board of Directors, which provides direction through the Chief Executive Officer David Graham. The board includes representation from the Ministry of Tourism, from which the substantial majority of the funding for Oman Sail originates, and an Executive Director, General Albert.

The Director of Sailing Development and National Training Manager is Neil Coxon, who has been in Oman for over two years. Neil reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer and directly manages the two Sailing School Centre Managers. The current structure will change in January 2012 with the addition of a Sailing School Development Manager, who will report to Neil, with delegated responsibility for the continuing operation of the increasing number of sailing schools.

Neil has a good range of relevant experience in the recreational sailing industry. He has managed two very busy sailing centres, one of which positions included establishing a unique approach to the delivery of training programmes to a wide range of client requirements. Consequently he is well suited to the tasks associated with his role in the Oman Sail National Sailing Scheme. The scope of his responsibilities includes the operation of the sailing schools, developing the National Sailing Team with aspirations for future Olympic participation and offshore racing, the creation of pathways and role models relevant to current and future schemes and the overall development of training programmes.

1.2 Programme Management Structure

The current management structure of Oman Sail and the range of expertise available are sufficient to provide Neil with adequate and comprehensive support as the level of participation grows in the future.

Despite the relatively short time for which Oman Sail has been established, the progress that has been made is impressive and indicative of a high level of commitment that should ensure success with respect to the long term development of sailing in Oman. The majority of funding is provided by the Ministry for Tourism with the remainder being from commercial partners, such as Oman Air and organisations with Corporate Social Responsibility agenda.

Although funding is not guaranteed beyond 2015, it is understood that similar arrangements will continue in the future. Performance targets have not been linked to current or future funding, however, Oman Sail has set its own which include introducing 30,000 young people to the sport by 2015 and to have Omani sailors participating in the 2020 Olympic Games. Progress to date implies that the organisation is capable of achieving both of these.

There is a positive drive to promote female participation in the sport, which is endorsed by Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said. In order to achieve this goal, there are a number of cultural factors that are being taken into consideration and a Development Officer, widely supported by the organisation, has been appointed to the task.

1.3 Systems, data and Records

The Centre Managers have been involved in decisions affecting the development of the schools and the associated operating practices. There is an intention to formalise the feedback structure in the future by way of an annual conference or similar forum.

Records are maintained of the qualifications and status of all of the active Instructors and Examiners. The records are in the form of personal folders for each individual, which are duplicated at the School at which they are employed and at the Oman Sail offices.

Similarly, records are held at both the awarding Sailing School and the Oman Sail offices of all of the young people who have received personal proficiency certificates.

2 Accredited Training Centres

2.1 Conditions for Accreditation

As the schools are owned and operated by Oman Sail, all of the decisions regarding the location and size of each one are based upon a strategic development plan. The current plan is to provide access to appropriate sailing facilities that cover the entire coastline by way of seven schools.

2.2 Administration

The Sailing Schools operate to common Oman Sail Operating Procedures. These are fully documented by the headquarters and include sufficiently comprehensive and appropriate direction to provide for the safe operation of the Sailing Schools with due regard for the local environment.

Each school is led by a Centre Manager. In the current organisation, both of the Centre Managers are qualified as Dinghy Examiners and Powerboat Examiners. To support them in the daily operation of the schools, in addition to a team of qualified dinghy instructors, they have a nominated Chief Instructor and an Office Supervisor.

Third party liability insurance is held and, at the time of the inspection, set at ten million US dollars.

Accident recording takes place with records held at the schools.

2.3 Boats Used

The craft available at both of the schools included Optimists, RS Tera, RS Quba, Laser, RS Vision, Laser Vago and Hobie catamarans. All of these are suitable for the level of activity and the sailing environment.

2.4 Training Equipment and Shoreside Facilities

Both of the sailing schools have adequate shoreside facilities to provide for the basic needs of participants. There is easy access to changing facilities, teaching areas ashore, equipment, launching facilities and training areas. Appropriate consideration is given to access to water and protection from exposure to the sun.

The school at Marina Banda Al Rhowda is housed in converted ISO containers. Building applications are being processed that should result in a permanent, purpose built facility.

In contrast, the school at Musannah benefits from a modern site that was built to accommodate the Asian Games in 2010 and is quite possibly one of the best sailing facilities available anywhere in the world to a sailing school delivering basic programmes. With generally more reliable winds and exceptional shoreside facilities, Musannah has naturally been selected as the base for the Oman Sail competitive team.

2.5 Tuition System

Delivery of the sailing programme is through a well organised system of supervision and instruction with which all of the staff are familiar. The Operating Procedures set the instructional ratios and other practices relevant to the safe and effective delivery of the various programmes.

Successful participants receive certificates that they can insert into a log book that allows them to record their progressions. The log books are very well presented, encourage engagement of the young person and are printed in Arabic and English.

2.6 Safety Operations

Safety is governed by the application of the working practices that have been developed and decided upon by Oman Sail. The directive approach is appropriate in the context and scale of the organisation. Highly qualified and experienced external consultants have been employed throughout the development of the operation.

2.7 Child Protection

A Child Protection policy statement has been produced that explains the fundamental obligations of both Oman Sail and every individual member of staff with respect to protecting the well being of young people.

The social structure in Oman originates from a protective, tribal family culture. Respect for and protection of individual rights and dignity are a fundamental way of life. Consequently the measures that we have found applied in other countries are neither appropriate nor applicable here in Oman, where these rights are intrinsic in day to day life for everyone involved.

2.8 Centre Inspection System

Responsibility for maintaining appropriate standards lies with the Director of Sailing Development. The introduction of the new post of Sailing School Development Manager in January 2012, with responsibility for the operation of the schools, will add to the rigour of the inspection process as there will then be a degree of separation between the operation and inspection functions.

The inspection criteria are known to the Centre Managers and appropriate to the scale of the operation. Inspections have been carried out at both of the Schools and current reports were presented at the time of this inspection. Action Plans were in place and had been followed up by re-inspection.

Suspension of accreditation is an unlikely occurrence. Poor performance would be identified in the normal course of operations and result in staff management processes that would resolve or remove the cause of any problems.

3 Safety Guidelines and Procedures

3.1 Safety Equipment

An appropriate scale of safety equipment was available and used by those observed afloat. Bottled drinking water and sun protection were also readily available.

The scale of equipment to be carried in safety boats is included in the Operating Procedures and was seen to be complied with in those craft that were sampled during the inspection.

Whilst there was third party support available at Musannah from the nearby Omani Naval base, the Marina Bandar Al Rowdha site was rather more dependent upon its own resources, specifically with regard to evacuation of a casualty to a medical facility if necessary. However, as this is the normal situation throughout the country, the location of the school does not present any unusual risk to participants.

3.2 Knowledge and Skills of Instructor Application

The Operating Procedures identify the Centre Manager as being responsible for the operation of their school. The majority of the current operation is predominantly linked to the working week and allows the Centre Manager to be present whenever the school is operating. However, there are sufficient Senior Instructors available at each school to ensure that appropriately qualified supervision is available to cover any absence of the Centre Manager or extension to the working period.

Syllabus and assessment criteria for Dinghy Instructors and Senior Instructors are both being developed and are identified as essential to the future growth of the organisation. Oman Sail has used well established international schemes to allow them to reach their current position. The imported technical skills combined with local knowledge and continued access to experienced consultants places the organisation in a very strong position to take full control of future developments in all respects of their programmes.

3.3 Risk Awareness and Management

Comprehensive risk assessments are included in the Operating Procedures. These are well known to all of the operational staff. There is a very good level of communication and rapport between the headquarters, as custodians of the Operating Procedures, and the Centre Managers of the schools, which allows risk assessments to be updated in order to respond to experience and ensure that they do not become out of date.

3.4 Operating Procedures

The clear and concise Operating Procedures are produced by the Oman Sail headquarters. The majority of the content is generic, which allows staff to operate between schools with minimal requirement for site specific training.

3.5 Local Operating Procedures

Covered under 3.4.

3.6 Accident and First Aid Training

All of the operational staff hold a First Aid qualification arising from a one day First Responder training programme that is valid for two years. As Oman does not have an established First Aid organisation, access to an appropriate national scheme does not exist. To the credit of Oman Sail it has been recognised that they have a duty of care that is above the national norm.

3.7 Major Incident Plan

Included in Operating Procedures handbook

3.8 Duty of Care Guidelines

The responsibility for providing appropriate care of those in their charge is covered during instructor induction and training.

4 Instructors

4.1 Instructor Structure and Qualifications

The syllabi for the Dinghy Instructor and Senior Instructor qualifications are under development. Staff currently operating have been trained and qualified to the standards used by RYA Training Centres in the United Kingdom.

The intention is to have a fully documented progressive instructor training programme in place that will be designed to fit the needs of the organisation and management of sail training that will cover Dinghy Instructor, Advanced Instructor, Senior Instructor and Examiner levels.

4.2 Safety Boat Training

There are no National regulations for operating powerboats in Oman.

Oman Sail has developed a National Powerboat Scheme, which provides two courses of training –

- The Oman National Powerboat Certificate – a certificate of competence in the basic skills of powerboating.
- The Oman Sail Safety Boat Course – is for sailing instructors and the crews of safety boats attending sailing races or training.

The syllabus for both courses is well presented in a branded Oman Sail Powerboating Syllabus and Logbook.

Assessments for the award of the Oman National Powerboat Certificate are conducted by Powerboat Examiners. The operating environment does not present conditions that require anything more than basic handling skills and safety awareness. Consequently, preparation for the assessment is conducted by Dinghy Instructors, as they hold the qualification.

4.3 Who is Taught by Whom

All levels of the National Sailing Scheme are taught by Dinghy Instructors. In the future, when the Advanced modules have been developed, these will be delivered by Dinghy Instructors who have received the necessary additional training to qualify as Advanced Instructors.

4.4 Who Teaches What

Covered under 4.3.

4.5 Techniques for Instruction

The programme at each level allowed for progressive development within a framework that gave sufficient flexibility for instructors to adapt their delivery to the prevailing conditions.

4.6 Successful Teaching Methods

Teaching methods delivered by qualified instructors at both of the Sailing Schools appeared to be effective. Young people demonstrated competence at their level of sailing and an apparent enthusiasm to learn more.

5 The Syllabus

5.1 The Syllabus

The syllabus is adequate to allow an individual who is new to the sport to gain the necessary skills to handle a boat without supervision when they have completed the third level. The content is progressive both within each level and across the whole scheme.

5.2 Structure

The National Sailing Scheme presents four progressive levels and three Advanced modules. The overview of the objectives for each level is as follows –

Fun Day – “The first step in sailing! At the end of this two hour course students will be able to steer the boat and understand where the wind is coming from”

Level 1 Getting Afloat – “At the end of this level the student will be able, with instructor guidance, to sail a small triangular course. Will have a basic understanding of how a boat sails and some experience of steering and handling the boat. A capsizing drill will also have been demonstrated with the participant’s involvement.”
The course is delivered in five modules each of two hours duration.

Level 2 Essential Skills – “At the end of this level the student will be able, with instructor guidance, to sail a triangular course unaided, will have a good understanding of the five essential core skills required to sail a boat properly and will be well on the way to becoming a confident small boat sailor.”
The course is delivered in five modules each of two hours duration.

Level 3 Intermediate Skills – “capable of independently navigating a vessel in the discipline under all conditions and taking sole responsibility for vessel and crew in such conditions.”

The course is delivered in six modules each of two hours duration.

The Advanced levels provide two days of training in each of three ‘disciplines’ –

“Spinnaker Sailing”

“Start Racing”

“Catamaran Sailing”

An Advanced log book is under late stages of development with a similar format to the National Sailing Scheme handbook.

5.3 Content

The content of the syllabi is appropriate to each level and includes relevant theory.

6 Participant Standards Achieved

6.1 Participant Assessment

The programme for the delivery of each level of achievement is delivered over a series of sessions as presented in Paragraph 5.2. At the end of each session, a record is made of the participants, topics covered and the standard achieved. By reference to the records, subsequent sessions can be modified to cover any shortfall and overall achievement can be confirmed before the award of a certificate.

The method of assessment is by way of a supportive rolling process rather than by a formal test or exam.

7 Communication

7.1 Communication

Oman Sail has a modern web site that provides a range of information about the organisation. There is potential to add more information regarding access to, content of and further opportunities for those who wish to enter into or have just started the sport.

There is a small dedicated communications team within the headquarters who have responsibility for the web site and hence any growth to the web site is under the direct control of the organisation. The communications team also use a number of social networking media to communicate with young people, including Face Book and Twitter.

It is intended to establish an annual training conference or seminar with the purpose of sharing experience and developing the training programme.

Recommendation

Despite the short time for which Oman Sail has been in existence, the organisation has made impressive progress in the creation of a viable national training programme. With a high level of commitment for future funding

It is recommended that the Oman Sail National Sailing Scheme is granted full ISAF Accreditation as the Omani National Training Programme.

Acknowledgement

Grateful appreciation is extended to everyone who has contributed to the rapid and impressive development of Oman Sail. Their combined efforts and obvious pride in their work made the task of inspection a straightforward process that revealed a strong sense of a team working towards a common and attainable goal.

The support and accommodating hospitality of Neil Coxon throughout the inspection was exemplary. His enthusiasm for the development of Oman Sail and the national training programme was indicative of his fitness to be the custodian of that responsibility.

The assistance given by all of the staff at the Oman Sail headquarters was very helpful in allowing a broad understanding to be gained of the environment in which the training programme has evolved and will continue to operate.

Both of the Centre Managers, Ali Abusaidi and Mohammed Al Balushi, provided a superb welcome to their respective Sailing Schools. Their pride in their work, their staff and their achievements was evident and justified

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