General Guidelines for Canoeing

1. Name of the sport and terms

Canoeing is the navigation of still waters and rivers of whitewater grades I - VI. Specific techniques and equipment are required depending on the weather or terrain and the water level. In German, “Kanu” is the collective term for all paddle craft of any kind permitted in Switzerland under the Inland Navigation Act: kayak, Canadian canoe, stand-up paddling (SUP), as hard-shell or inflatable craft, as single or multi-person boats. Excluded are rafts with a diameter of more than 2.5 metres and so-called rafts for 6 or more people.

In these guidelines, the terms canoe leader and canoe guide have the same meaning. They describe the activities of leading, instructing and guiding courses, excursions and activities on all waters with the paddle craft defined in the Inland Navigation Act (kayak, Canadian canoe, stand-up paddle board)

The terms canoe trips and canoe courses cover all courses, excursions and activities on all waters with the paddle craft defined in the Inland Navigation Act (kayak, Canadian canoe, stand-up paddle board).

2. Purpose of the guidelines

The guidelines set out the requirements for running commercial canoe trips and courses and govern the training of full-time and part-time canoe guides and trainers at different levels. They also regulate how equipment, nature and the environment are treated.

The guidelines thus also enable untrained tourists to go canoeing properly equipped, under expert leadership and in an orderly setting with the greatest possible safety.

Terms used in these guidelines such as leader, guide, operator etc. refer to persons of all genders.

3. Classification of canoeing by difficulty grade

The basis is the Swiss river map, on which rivers are colour-coded by difficulty grade. The description of the difficulty grades is regulated internationally and always refers to a medium water level.

- Grades: by colour on the river map
  - Lake: still water blue
  - WW I: flat water (gently flowing) blue
  - WW I - in places WW II: flowing water green
  - WW II - in places WW III yellow orange red violet
  - WW III – in places WW IV
  - WW IV – in places WW V
  - WW V – in places WW VI
- Character of the waters:

  Other general hazards and weirs are never shown exhaustively on the map. In addition, river courses are repeatedly subject to change due to floods and human intervention

- Responsibility:

  No liability is accepted towards persons or institutions for incorrect or incomplete information on the river map.

The classification by difficulty grade assumes normal conditions (medium water level). Weather changes on lakes (storms, thunderstorms etc.) or increased water flow, for example during snowmelt, thunderstorms or reservoir releases, can change the difficulty grade significantly within a very short time.

4. Training and further training of canoe guides and leaders

1. The following levels of training and exams for canoe guides and leaders are distinguished:

- SOA Canoe Leader Lake (exam taken in kayak, Canadian canoe and on SUP)

SOA Canoe Leader 1 (flowing water): WW I - in places III (2 craft, and 1 craft at least at lake level)

- SOA Canoe Leader 2 (whitewater): WW III and above (main craft, plus 2 craft at least at lake level and level 1 respectively)
- J+S and ESA canoeing leaders
- SOA and J+S / ESA canoeing experts
- Canoe instructors with federal certificate

Training and exams can be completed at any level as a special discipline. The titles are as follows:

- SOA SUP Guide Lake / 1 or 2
- SOA Kayak Guide Lake / 1 or 2
- SOA Canadian Canoe Guide Lake / 1 or 2

2. The structure of the training, the admission requirements and the training content are set out in the Canoe Exam Guidelines (see appendices).

3. Canoe guides and leaders must undertake further training regularly. This is to maintain the level of knowledge and skills acquired and adapt it to new developments. Proof of activity is provided by the canoeing provider (company)

4. The expert commission of the Safety in Adventures foundation decides on the recognition of training courses and the classification of leaders according to section 4.1, after consulting the SOA and, where applicable, other organisations concerned.

5. Rights and duties of canoe guides/leaders

1. Once their training is complete (see appendix), Lake leaders are entitled to run trips and courses on still waters independently.

2. Leaders 1 are entitled to lead/teach canoe groups independently, observing the WW grade and once their training is complete (see appendix).

3. Once their training is complete (see appendix), Leaders 2 are entitled to lead canoe trips of all kinds. A Leader 2 may also be on the water together with other groups in a larger formation.

4. The number of guests must be adapted to the waters and environmental conditions in question.

5. The recommended group sizes per leader are figures proven in practice. They must be reduced depending on conditions, the difficulty of the trip and the participants' level of training, but may be increased slightly in particularly favourable conditions.

Lake: max. 12 boats or 16 participants

Canoe Guide 1: max. 8 boats or 16 participants

Canoe Guide 2: max. 6 boats or 12 participants

6. Rights and duties of operators

1. An operator is anyone who decides to run canoe trips, advertises them, makes the necessary preparations, determines the schedule, deploys any additional responsible canoe guides and is in charge of the organisation.

2. Anyone acting as an operator must have completed training and, from WW III, either employ a Leader 2 or a person with recognised special canoeing training as technical manager, or hold the corresponding qualification themselves.

3. Operators and responsible canoe guides:

- Appropriate choice of waters
- Obtaining any necessary permits for navigation / put-in and take-out points
- Selecting and, where necessary, training the responsible canoe leaders and assistants
- Reconnaissance of the trip incl. additional take-out points
- Setting the meeting points, including parking for participants
- Checking the meteorological and hydrological conditions
- Establishing a safety plan

For commercial offers from WW 3, compulsory external safety audit in accordance with the Risk Activities Act and the corresponding ordinances.

- Respect for nature and the environment when organising and running trips
- Taking out the necessary insurance for the company and the canoe leaders
- Instructing and equipping participants (paddle talk)
- Briefing, including information on the risks of the planned trip and the requirements for participants (safety talk)
- Deciding whether the trip goes ahead

7. Requirements for participants in canoe trips

1. Canoeing requires participants to be in good health. People with health problems should seek medical advice or contact the operator in advance about possible participation.

Participants must be able to swim and must not be afraid of deep water.
Participants must take out their own accident insurance.
The operator is entitled to have participants confirm in writing that they meet these requirements.

2. Participants in canoe trips must follow the instructions of the operator and the canoe guides/ leaders.

3. After being briefed on the risks of the trip (safety talk), every participant in a planned canoe trip is entitled to withdraw from the contract with the operator. Any refunds are at the operator's discretion and are not usual.

Once the trip has started, leaving it is only possible with due regard for the prevailing conditions and the other members of the group.

8. Safety plan and rescue

1. Every guide/leader knows the safety plan for the water to be paddled and has taken the planned measures (preliminary checks, equipment, information).

2. Every guide/leader is entitled to interrupt or end the trip if difficulties arise (guests/environment).

3. Every guide/leader carries a waterproof first aid kit (and administers first aid in the event of accidents), a mobile phone and any further rescue and recovery equipment required by the situation.

4. The responsible canoe guide/leader decides whether outside help is to be requested (air rescue, doctor, hospital). The legitimate wishes of an injured person are to be taken into account.

5. In the event of an accident, the operator must be notified as quickly as possible and, if necessary, informs the SOA office regarding media information.

6. In the event of serious accidents, the operator or the responsible canoe guide/leader notifies the police.

9. Nature and the environment

1. Operators and canoe guides/leaders protect nature and the environment. They work together with nature and environmental protection organisations. In particular, they ensure environmentally friendly put-ins and take-outs, considerate behaviour towards nature along the way and good relations with riverside landowners, anglers and other canoeists.

2. Operators and guides/leaders promote participants' understanding of nature and the environment through good organisation and targeted organisational measures.

3. Rules and bans on navigation times or water volumes must be strictly observed.

10. Further development of the guidelines

These guidelines were drawn up by the SOA Canoe Section for the 2016 season together with the new training guidelines and the 2016 exam regulations.

These guidelines are aimed at specialised and commercial canoe providers, in particular the member organisations of the SOA. They replace all previous guidelines and all arrangements or agreements on guidelines (written or oral) within and outside the SOA. Guidelines that governed cooperation with the Swiss Canoe Federation are replaced by these guidelines. The federal J+S/ ESA requirements have been taken into account in these guidelines as far as possible.

These guidelines are reviewed periodically by the SOA and adapted where necessary.

Alpnach, November 2015

SOA Canoe Section

Approved by the SOA Board: 30.11.2015

Appendix 1:

SOA canoe leader training: structure (summary of the exam guidelines)

Level	Title: role	Admission	Outline content	Duration
	Admission requirements for the preparation courses or exams	- 18 years - valid first aid or Samaritan certificate or equivalent training - valid BLS – AED certificate - proof of practical experience in canoeing (kayak, Canadian canoe or SUP) by: logbook, recommendation from an employer in the canoe sector or a similar institution.	The documents/certificates must be brought on the first day of the course. Missing or invalid documents/certificates must be submitted by the time of the exam. Attending the preparation courses is strongly recommended. The exam consists of two parts: - canoe technical exam - theory exams	
1	**SOA Canoe Leader Lake:** - passed exam in kayak, Canadian canoe and on SUP **Or specialised:** - SOA SUP Leader Lake - SOA Kayak Leader Lake - SOA Canadian Canoe Leader Lake Entitled to lead groups on lakes independently or to lead a group formation	practical and theoretical knowledge with at least one canoe craft on still water: - kayak - Canadian canoe - stand-up paddling (SUP)	- timed technique course and paddling course with set manoeuvres and guests - rescue and recovery / swimming rescue with BLS/AED - briefing with paddle talk and safety talk - theory: environment/weather, trip preparation, safety management, teaching methods, legal basis - leading groups / trip organisation	Optional: 4 days of preparation courses at SOA companies Followed by 1 day technical exam and 1 day theory

2	**SOA Canoe Leader 1** - passed exam in kayak, Canadian canoe and on SUP **Or specialised:** - SOA SUP Leader 1 - SOA Kayak Leader 1 - SOA Canadian Canoe Leader 1 Entitled to lead groups on rivers in the WW 2+ range independently	practical and theoretical knowledge with at least one canoe craft on flowing water up to at least WW 3: - kayak - Canadian canoe - stand-up paddling (SUP) Recommendation: passed Lake exam	- timed technique course and paddling course with set manoeuvres - rescue and recovery / swimming rescue with BLS/AED - briefing with paddle talk and safety talk - theory: environment/weather, trip preparation, safety management, teaching methods, legal basis - leading groups / trip organisation - participants without Leader Lake: additional theory exam	Optional: 4 days of preparation courses at SOA companies. Followed by: 1 day technical exam and 1 day theory
3	**SOA Canoe Leader 2** Specialised in one canoe craft: - SOA SUP Leader 2 - SOA Kayak Leader 2 - SOA Canadian Canoe Leader 2 Entitled to lead groups on rivers in the WW 3 and above range independently **or to lead a group formation**	- passed Canoe Leader 1 or specialised exam in kayak, Canadian canoe or SUP - practical and theoretical knowledge of at least WW 4 - or another equivalent training recognised by the SOA - at least 1 season of work experience - proof of work (logbook or employer)	- technique exam - recovery and rescue / swimming rescue (also on a rope) - sign language, general equipment knowledge; in-depth rescue technique, environmental issues, legal basis - in-depth trip preparation, safety management, teaching methods - leading groups / trip organisation and planning - participants without Leader Lake / Leader 1: additional theory exam	Various preparation courses at SOA companies Followed by: 1 day technical exam and 1 day theory
TL	**SOA Tripleader module**	This module is part of the Lake, Leader 1 and Leader 2 exams Participants who have completed this module with an exam in another discipline can take a shortened theory exam		

Appendix 2:

Guidelines for the exams SOA Canoe Leader Lake / 1 / 2

Training and exam parts

The SOA leader course incl. exams lasts a total of 2-6 working days. These are made up as follows: training at SOA companies:

- 1 day: practical training in the main craft (kayak, Canadian canoe or SUP)
- 1 day: half a day of training in each second craft or specialised further training in the main craft
- 2 days of practical exam preparation and theory lessons

Exam and certification by experts of the SOA Canoe Section

- **1 day Canoe Leader exam**
- **1 day Tripleader training and final theory exam**

Exam regulations SOA Canoe Leader Lake / 1 / 2

Recognition / entitlement	**According to Appendix 1**
Exam craft Remarks	**Kayak, Canadian canoe, SUP** Lake exam: only hard-shell boats permitted, except SUP Leader 1 exam: hard-shell and inflatable boats permitted Leader 2 exam: only hard-shell boats permitted, except SUP Candidates decide themselves on their specialisation or the split of craft for the exam
Admission requirements	According to Appendix 1
Registration for the exam	According to the announcement, to: SOA office Hadlaubstr. 49 8006 Zürich Tel. 044 360 53 62 Mail mail@swissoutdoorassociation.ch

Information	From Kathrin Fischbacher, head of the SOA Canoe Section 079 286 46 59 / info@kanuzentrum.ch
Cancellation	In writing to the SOA office or Kathrin Fischbacher For cancellations up to 1 week before the exam, a processing fee of 100.- is charged in any case; for later cancellations or unjustified absence from the exam, the full amount is retained!
Grading / weighting	The individual parts are weighted differently. Total: 14 partial grades max. 1 exam part may be insufficient (e.g. unexpected capsize/fall from the board) The average of the grades of all exam parts must be sufficient (grade 4)
Exam content	Practical parts: 1-4 oral exams written exams Grades count 3 times Grade counts 2 times Grades count once
Exam waters	SOA Canoe Leader Lake: still water SOA Canoe Leader 1: at least WW 2-3 SOA Canoe Leader 2: at least WW 3-4
Exam duration	2 days: technical practical and oral exam, written theory exams (can be taken in a shortened procedure with proof of an equivalent canyoning or rafting exam)
Examiners	At least 2 experts per practical exam part Members of the SOA Canoe Section or the SOA list of experts
Practice time	There is no time to practise at the exam itself. Personal preparation at home, in particular learning the theory questions and practising the test figures and swimming, is therefore a prerequisite.
Adjustments	The tasks must be demonstrated in one go. Depending on the exam location, the experts may make the exercises harder or easier.
Insurance	Accident and liability insurance is the responsibility of the participants

Equipment	- bring your own boat/board and paddle Further boats/boards are available as stated on the registration form - canoe clothing for longer and repeated time in cold water, canoe shoes. - suitable buoyancy aid, spray deck for kayak - complete rescue equipment -- writing materials, course documents - food
Requirements for obtaining Canoe Guide recognition	- attending the full exam - average grade 4 / max. one insufficient partial exam - payment of the exam fee before the exam - meeting the admission requirements - bringing complete canoe leader equipment appropriate to the exam (SUP, kayak or Canadian canoe)
Appeals	Must be submitted in writing to the President of the SOA Canoe Section for the attention of the Board within 7 days of completing the exam
Validity of recognition	2 full calendar years after the exam. Companies are responsible for further training. Public further training courses are held every year by SOA companies.
Renewal of recognition	- proof of 2 days of canoeing training during the last 2 years and - proof of activity by a canoeing provider (company)
Recognition of equivalent qualifications	Canoe guides with equivalent qualifications (e.g. foreign diplomas) can, under certain conditions, obtain recognition as SOA Canoe Leader without taking the exam (requests for recognition of equivalence must be submitted with documentation of the diplomas and exam content of the other qualifications to the SOA office for the attention of the Canoe Section).

Alpnach, November 2015