

HRP17: Vessel and Maritime Safety

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The purpose of this Procedure is to ensure Southern Cross University (SCU) management, employees, students and others are aware of the risks associated with maritime safety in the workplace and relevant management strategies and to provide advice on the risk mitigation process.

(2) All employees, students, and others must follow this Procedure.

(3) This Procedure applies to all SCU Work Units and sites.

Section 2 - Definitions

Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)	Statutory authority responsible for marine safety in Australia.
Domestic Commercial Vessels	A boat or other vessel is for use in connection with any commercial, governmental, or research activity.
Boating operation	Involve using a boat for work, transport, research, or educational purposes. These procedures do not include the use of commercial ferries for transport.
Boating Safety Plan	A document for each field trip involving boating operations will be provided, detailing the details of the boat, Skipper, location of operations, and emergency information.
Certificate of Operation	A certificate issued by AMSA sets out the conditions under which a boat must operate.
Certificate of Survey	A certificate issued by an accredited marine surveyor/AMSA that provides evidence that a boat has been surveyed and meets specified standards for construction stability and safety equipment.
Crew	Are the persons (including the vessel's Master) whose duty is to navigate or work the vessel or carry out other operations?
Designated Person	The Designated Persons are responsible for updating/maintaining the Safety Management System as per AMSA requirements and ensuring safe vessel operations and compliance with regulations.
Master	The individual is responsible for a vessel's safe operation and navigation. The Master can also operate as the Skipper.
Safety Management System (SMS)	All domestic commercial vessels must have a safety management system (SMS). This system will demonstrate and document how your vessel meets the mandatory general safety duties.
SCU Safety Boating Officer	A responsible SCU delegate was appointed to oversee all maritime activities conducted during SCU operations. May undertake a dual role as Maritime Safety Diving Officer.
SCU Boating Safety Committee	A SCU-governed committee overseeing all vessel and maritime safety matters.

Operate	1. To determine or exercise control over the course or direction of the vessel or over the means of propulsion of the vessel (whether or not the vessel is underway). 2. To pilot the vessel, and in the case of the vessel's owner, to cause or allow the vessel to be operated by someone else.
Other vessels and non-vessels	Includes kayaks, canoes, dinghies, tinnies, floating pontoons, barges, submersibles, or air-cushion vessels. Non-vessels include surf skis, waterskis, inflatable rafts, or paddleboards. If a craft is not a vessel, then the national system requirements do not apply.
RiskWare	Electronic database for reporting all incidents and near misses. Riskware includes the investigation of incidents against systemic causes, the assignment of corrective actions, and regulatory and performance reporting.
SCU Boating Procedures	Safe boating procedures written by the Faculty of Science and Engineering.
SCU Nominated an on-shore contact person	The on-shore person who is in regular contact with vessels on voyages. This person instigates search and rescue operations if contact is lost with the vessels.
Skipper	The person in charge of operating a boat must hold the relevant certificate of competency and experience, i.e., Coxswain.
Volunteer Marine Rescue organisation	A volunteer marine search and rescue organisation.

Section 3 - General Principles

Risk Management Process

(4) SCU will follow the risk management process outlined in [WHSMP02: Hazard Identification, Risk and Opportunity Management Procedure](#). This process includes:

- a. Hazard identification.
- b. Risk assessment.
- c. Risk Control.
- d. Review of control measures.

Consultation

(5) Consultation is critical for effective risk management and is outlined in [WHSMP07: Consultation, Communication and Participation](#).

Part A - Hazard Identification

Statutory and Scope Context

Boating and vessel operations

(6) All boating and vessel operations must comply with the Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012, National Standards for Commercial Vessels, and local port and harbor regulations. Operations in international waters must also adhere to relevant local laws and relevant SCU procedures.

Limitations

(7) This procedure does not cover diving (refer to HRP18: Diving and Underwater work).

Vessel Identification and Systems

Boat Registration

(8) All boats used for SCU boating operations registered with AMSA as Domestic Commercial Vessels must display their AMSA Unique Vessel identifier (UVI), except for human-powered vessels (i.e., non-vessels).

Safety Management System (see SCUBP - 9. Safety Management System)

(9) Each boat, except for non-vessels, must have a documented and current safety management system (SMS) with the following information included:

- a. Summary of features.
- b. Crew qualifications, licenses, and permitted number.
- c. Boat details: ID, hull type, class, length, propulsion system, engine power.
- d. Hazard identification and risk control measures.
- e. User induction and training requirements.
- f. Safe work procedures.
- g. Emergency plans and equipment.
- h. Maintenance schedule.
- i. Inspection records.
- j. Boating pre-departure and operational checklists.
- k. Logbook.

(10) The SMS must be approved by the Designated Person within the Faculty of Science and Engineering and audited annually. All masters, skippers, and crew must be familiar with the SMS.

Consultation for Maritime Operations

(11) SCU ensures consultation with commercial operators, volunteer marine rescue organisations, employees, and managers during all phases of maritime operations, particularly in developing safe operating procedures (SOPs).

Information, Instruction, and Training (Context Setting)

(12) SCU must ensure suitable training, instruction, or supervision to protect employees from risks. Training will cover emergency procedures, onboard procedures, manual handling, and other relevant topics such as swimming competency.

(13) Training should regularly be updated to align with new regulations.

Pre-Departure Condition & Environment Checks

Vessel inspection and planning (see SCUBP. Maintenance of Vessels and Equipment)

(14) The Vessel Pre-Departure Checklist should be used to evaluate the vessel's condition and must be completed before departure.

(15) Crew and divers are trained to carry out Pre-Operation Checks during the inductions. The vessel operator must evaluate the vessel against the checklist daily and provide a completion record in the vessel logbook.

(16) This planning stage should consider:

- a. Pre-work inspections, including vessel maintenance checks.
- b. Vessel type.
- c. The length of time required to do the work.
- d. Allocation of resources (e.g., people, equipment, PPE, and skills).
- e. Weather conditions, time of day, tide levels, and surge impact.

(17) Before commencing operations, a visual inspection must be performed before unloading the vessel into the water. Some points to consider include:

- a. Working environment, including access and egress onto the vessel.
- b. Condition of the vessel and procedure for loading and unloading into the water.
- c. Equipment required for use on the vessel is loaded into the vessel before entering the water.

On-board Hazardous Chemicals/Dangerous Goods

(18) Dangerous Goods and hazardous substances must be stored per WHS Regulations, Safety Data Sheets (SDS), and HRP11: Hazardous Chemical Management and comply with Marine Order 41 – Carriage of Dangerous Goods. A storage compartment with proper ventilation and bunding is required. A spill kit must be available on board. Chemical storage will be subject to regular checks to ensure ongoing compliance.

Emergency Planning (Identification of Emergency Scenarios)

Emergency plan (see SCUBP. Emergency Procedures)

(19) Emergency and Contingency Plans are required before work commences and must be updated for new work phases. Regular drills should be implemented, and the emergency plan should be reviewed and updated post-incident.

Part B - Risk Assessment

Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment, and Control Measures

(20) Hazard identification, risk assessment, and identification of control measures must be done and documented in consultation with those involved in the boating or vessel operations before commencement. Completed risk assessments, including proposed control measures, must be authorised by the manager of the person conducting the risk assessment. This authorisation confirms that all reasonably foreseeable hazards associated with the proposed operations have been identified, and risks will be eliminated or minimised through the planned control measures.

Part C - Risk Control

Operational Planning and Authorisations

Boating Safety Plan (see SCUBP. Boating Safety Plan)

(21) For each boating operation, a Boating Safety Plan must be developed and submitted to the Maritime Safety Boating Officer for approval as part of the field trip approval process.

(22) The document should include:

- a. Boat name, length, registration, survey information, Skipper/coxswain name, contact number, training, and experience.
- b. Confirmation that people have been inducted as crew.

- c. Description of boating work and participants' training/experience.
- d. Dates, accurate location (including GPS coordinates), and number of proposed days on the water.
- e. Number of employees onboard (minimum of two people must always be on board and subject to vessel crewing requirements).
- f. Details of daily scheduled calling to the designated contact person.
- g. Emergency contacts and protocols are needed for search and rescue.

Field Trip Approvals (see SCUBP. Field Work Approvals)

(23) Before any SCU field trip involving boating or vessel operations starts, the field trip leader must obtain approval from the SCU Boating Officer or nominee as part of the field trip approval process. The field trip leader must submit relevant documentation, such as a Boating Safety Plan and Risk Assessment, to the SCU Boating Officer for review at least five (5) working days before the commencement of the trip.

(24) Once the SCU Boating Officer has approved the boating or vessel operations, the field trip leader must make the Boating Safety Plan, Risk Assessment, and relevant Safe Work Procedures available to all participants. Hence, they understand the likely risks and hazards involved, can perform the task safely, and are equipped with adequate knowledge to react in an emergency. The Boating Officer must approve any changes to the proposed boating or vessel operation before activities occur.

Master/Skipper Authority

(25) The authority of the Master on the vessel overrules standard management and supervisory structures.

Skipper Requirements (see SCUBP. Master and Skipper Requirements)

(26) Skipper Requirements

Qualifications for Skippering University Boats

(27) All SCU skippers must hold a current first aid certificate, a current recreational boat license, and a Coxswains Grade 3 competency (the latter applies after June 30, 2025).

(28) This exemption may be for boats, time, and areas limited at the discretion of the SCU Boating Officer.

Smooth and Partially Smooth Waters

(29) Smooth and partially smooth waters in QLD are defined and available at [Smooth and partially smooth water limits](#), and in NSW, the locations of Smooth and Partially Smooth Waters are listed in the [NSW Marine Safety Regulation 2016](#), Schedule 2 "[Partially Smooth Waters](#)" and Schedule 3 "[Smooth Waters](#)".

(30) The SCU Master, Skipper, and Crew must register their details with the SCU Safety Boating Officer, who will enter the information on the Vessel Crew Training Register. Details of relevant qualifications and experience level must be recorded as a licence/certification number, and the period to which the qualification remains valid must be forwarded to the SCU Boating Officer for inclusion on the Register.

Coxswain Statement of Understanding (see SCUBP. Master and Skipper Boat Trip Responsibilities)

(31) SCU master and skippers must have read and understood these procedures and signed the SCU Master-Skipper Induction form and the Duties and Responsibilities Statement. Master and Skippers must have also read and understood the boats:

- a. Safety Management System.
- b. Risk Assessment(s).
- c. Safe Work Procedure(s): The master/skipper must abide by the operational and crewing limits on the boats Certificate of Operation and Survey.

Coxswain Induction and Training

(32) University masters and skippers must be inducted and trained by the SCU Boating Officer to use boats and relevant equipment. The SCU Boating Officer (or experienced Coxswain) must record any training, inductions, skills, or competencies demonstrated on the Master/Skipper Vessel Induction form, Crew Training Register, and boat logbook. The SCU Boating Officer may audit existing University masters and skippers to validate skills, knowledge, and competency to ensure safety.

SCU Boating Officer Qualifications (SBO)

(33) The SBO must hold the following qualifications:

- a. Coxswain Grade 3.
- b. Senior First Aid and Resuscitation Certificate.

Equipment and PPE Controls

Boating Safety Equipment (see SCUBP. Boating Safety Equipment)

(34) All boats must carry safety equipment specified by AMSA and state maritime legislation and be registered with AMSA.

(35) All boats must have a 406MHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) if the vessel is operating offshore to AS/NZS 4280.1, life jackets, marine VHF radios, flares, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and other safety equipment specified by AMSA. All equipment must be checked to ensure it is in good working condition, within the expiry date specified, and operated within the manufacturer's recommendations. A Marine F-scale first aid kit and a fire extinguisher must be provided on board. Any additional safety equipment identified in the risk assessment must be carried out. The Master or Skipper must check that all safety equipment is on board before departure and that all employees understand the correct use of such equipment. A safety equipment checklist should be included in the boat's SMS. Quarterly inspections of this equipment take place.

(36) All safety equipment must be stored in a boat to be readily accessible in an emergency. Any decision made by the Master or Skipper regarding safe work and the wearing of safety equipment is final and must be followed by all persons on the boat. Any employee or student who uses boats and ancillary equipment must report any damage or malfunctions to their manager and the SCU Boating Officer as soon as practicable on return from the boating operations. The SCU Boating Officer (or experienced Coxswain) must undertake annual boat/trailer safety inspections on SCU boats to ensure that boats are well maintained, safety equipment is in date, and ancillary equipment is functioning correctly.

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) (see SCUBP. Personal Flotation Devices)

(37) Personal flotation devices (PFDs) must always be worn onboard for all boating and vessel operations and adhere to AS4758. PFDs must be serviced periodically to manufacturers' specifications. All vessel passengers must conduct a pre-task visual inspection of the PFD.

(38) PFDs must be stored and maintained according to OEM and AS4758.

Boating Safety Briefing (see SCUBP. Crew Safety Briefing and Take 5 Checklist)

(39) The Master must undertake a full boating safety briefing for all new passengers and crew. The boating safety briefing should include relevant details of the boat's Safety Management System, plus the location and function of emergency safety equipment. This must be recorded in the boat logbook and signed off by the Master/Skipper.

(40) A Take 5 checklist must be completed and signed by Master and Skipper.

Scheduled Calling (see SCUBP - 21. Scheduled Calling)

(41) The master/skipper must implement a scheduled calling system with the nearest Volunteer Marine Rescue organisation and/or the SCU-nominated contact.

SCU Nominated On-shore Contact Person (SNOCP)

(42) The SNOCP must be trained to respond when vessels become overdue or missing. The SNOCP must be a research team member or have a sufficient understanding of the vessel's operations to ensure an informed response. The SNOCP is to be available for the scheduled voyages and be supplied with detailed plans.

Overdue and Missing Vessel Procedure

(43) A procedure must be prepared for initiating a search and rescue if the vessel is overdue or missing. The procedure would be initiated if the SNOCP does not hear from the vessel at the scheduled calling time or cannot contact it. The procedure will describe how to escalate the search and rescue to the appropriate emergency services.

Weather and Sea Conditions (see SCUBP - 22. Weather and Sea Conditions)

(44) Boats and other vessels must not operate in rough or hazardous weather conditions. Masters/skippers must check weather forecasts (i.e., wind, wave, swell, current, and tidal predictions) before undertaking the activity to ensure safe operating conditions.

Towing Trailer Boats (see SCUBP - 25. Towing Trailer Boats)

(45) Only suitably experienced master/skippers can tow larger trailer boats on the road. Trainee skippers must undertake a boat towing training induction as part of the Coxswain Safety Induction & Training delivered by the SCU Safety Boating Officer (or experienced Coxswain). Trainee skippers must always be supervised whilst towing a trailer boat until they are deemed competent. Additional towing training with an external registered training organisation is recommended for trainee skippers with limited towing experience. Before departure, the towing capacity of the vehicle used must be checked to ensure it is safe and legally compliant to tow the total weight of the boat, trailer, and equipment. The braking mechanism and trailer must be checked for safe function.

Fatigue Management and Fitness for Work (see SCUBP - 26. Fatigue Management)

(46) Shifts over 12 hours in 24 hours while skippering boats or operating motor vehicles are prohibited. A 15-minute break every 2 hours is recommended for towing to reduce driver fatigue. Refer to the HRP23: Fatigue Risk Management Procedure for further guidance. The use of drugs and alcohol is not permitted on SCU vessels. All crew, including the Master and Skipper, must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. All employees must also consider prescription medication's impact and/or side effects (e.g., hay fever or seasickness tablets can cause drowsiness).

Emergency Procedures (see SCUBP - 27. Emergency Procedures)

(47) All crew of a boat must be prepared for emergencies and have:

- a. Read and understood the boat's SMS and boating safety plan to understand relevant emergency procedures.
- b. Knowledge of the location of all safety gear, fire extinguishers, and first aid kits.

Training in First Aid

(48) The Master / Skipper must hold a current First Aid and CPR certificate. The minimum standard is HLTAID11, which includes CPR.

Knowledge of Local Emergency Contacts

(49) In the event of an accident or incident, the master/Skipper must:

- a. Ensure the safety of personnel onboard.
- b. Ensure the safety of the boat.
- c. Provide first aid assistance when required.
- d. If a serious medical emergency occurs, apply DRSABCD and call for an ambulance to assist at the closest landing port.

(50) For additional information, Refer to WHSMP05: First Aid, Emergency preparedness and Response Procedure.

Part D - Review of Control Measures

Incident Reporting, Notification and Continuous Improvement

(51) Employees and students must immediately report any boating incidents, accidents, or near misses to the field trip leader and report the incident, accident, or near miss on RiskWare as soon as reasonably practicable or at least within 24 hours of the accident, incident, or near miss occurring.

(52) As per AMSA, if the marine incident is considered 'notifiable,' the Master must, as soon as reasonably possible after becoming aware of the incident, submit incident alert form 18. Additionally, within 72 hours of becoming aware of the incident, incident report form 19 must be completed. Notifiable marine incidents include:

- a. Death of or injury to a person on board.
- b. Loss or presumed loss of a vessel.
- c. Collision with another vessel or an object.
- d. Grounding, sinking, flooding, or capsizing of a vessel.
- e. Fire on board.
- f. Loss of stability that affects the safety of a vessel.
- g. Structural failure of a vessel.
- h. Close-quarters situation.
- i. Loss, or possible loss, of a person from a vessel (i.e., person-overboard, even if picked up).

(53) These incidents must be reported and notified immediately per WHSMP17: Incident Management, Reporting and Investigation Procedure.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(54) Refer to [WHSMP13: Responsibility and Accountability Statement](#).

Section 5 - Records of Documentation

(55) All relevant documentation will be recorded and kept following WHS Legislation and other legislative obligations, including:

- a. FSE Vessel and Trailer Register.
- b. SCU Crew Training register.
- c. Boat logbook.
- d. Maintenance and inspection records.
- e. Field trip operations database.

(56) Records are kept for any work performed on all vessels and boats, including:

- a. Service/Maintenance records for the vessel.
- b. Safe Work Instructions.
- c. Training evidence/licences.
- d. Competency assessments.
- e. Incident reporting.
- f. Emergency plans.

Section 6 - Revision and approval history

(57) This Procedure will be reviewed as per nominated review dates or because of other events, such as:

- a. Internal and external audit outcomes.
- b. Legislative changes include the Maritime Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012 and the National Standards for Commercial Vessels.
- c. Outcomes from management reviews.
- d. Incidents.

Section 7 - References

Work Health and Safety Act (in the applicable jurisdiction that SCU operates)
Work Health and Safety Regulation is in the applicable jurisdiction SCU operates.
Maritime Safety Queensland Act 2002
NSW Marine Safety Regulation 2016
Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012
Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Regulation 2013
Australian Maritime Safety Authority Act 1990 (AMSA Act)

Section 8 - Related Documents

[WHSMP05: First Aid, Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)

[WHSMP17: Incident Management, Reporting and Investigation](#)

[WHSMP13: Responsibility and Accountability Statement](#)

Vessel Pre-Departure Checklist

Vessel Crew Training Register

SCU Boating Procedures – Faculty of Science and Engineering

Status and Details

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Effective Date	29th October 2025
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Responsible Executive	Kim Franks Vice President (People and Culture)
Head of Work Unit	Brendan Pearce Director, Workplace Relations
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