



1. Overview of Operating at QM

Latest update: 20/3/2026

Highlighted **GREEN** text indicates a paragraph where the latest UPDATES have been made. When this handbook has been read, the relevant section must be signed electronically on a QM tablet, which is also the place to sign when you have read any other documents. Those who have read an earlier version of this handbook must sign in the current year to indicate they have EITHER read the latest version OR that they have 'read the UPDATES and are satisfied that they have refreshed themselves with all points within the handbook'.

INTRODUCTION TO ALL THE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs)

Terms used:

- ‘member of staff’, ‘staff’ or ‘instructor’: may apply equally to all staff (employed or freelance), volunteers, visiting coaches and helpers including those participating in work experience and induction training
- ‘students’: may apply equally to persons under instruction, hirers, any other water-user including Club Members.

All documents have been written to explain clearly: 1) how to operate at QM in a safe and effective way; 2) the standards expected from staff at different levels. The information will be required on an ongoing basis.

Any members of staff who have difficulties in reading or understanding any of the information in this document must inform the Sailing Principal who will help.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Queen Mary Sailing Club is an organisation owned by its Membership overseen by the QM Council (elected members). It is open all year round running an active racing calendar to include open events, training programme, and groups/clubs. QM is a RYA Recognised Training Centre, Sailability Club, RYA Affiliated Club, OnBoard Club. QM hold an Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) license, permitting it to deliver dinghy sailing, windsurfing, wingsurfing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding to under-18s in a commercial manner. Additionally QM provides facilities for events and training for Royal Thames Yacht Club (RTYC), the Royal Yachting Association (RYA), and other groups.

Abbreviations used throughout:

- QM: Queen Mary Sailing Club
- RYA: Royal Yachting Association
- DO: Duty Officer
- AMS: Assistant Manager & Sailing Principal
- CDI: Chief Dinghy Instructor
- CWI: Chief Windsurf Instructor
- CKI: Chief Keelboat Instructor
- CPI: Chief Powerboat Instructor
- LI: Lead Instructor
- CIs: Chief Instructors
- CS: Club Secretary
- SI: RYA Senior Instructor

STAFF

QM employs a small team of full-time staff with most of the Team being seasonal and zero hours contracted.

A full, current list of the full-time team, along with the technical advisors for each discipline is found in the separate ‘Meet the Team’ document.

At any given time the water is open, there will be a **QM DUTY OFFICER** (named on the Daily Information Board in the foyer or on the weekend rotas available on the staff website) who

is a RYA Senior Instructor taking charge of all water-based activity for that time. The Duty Officer's instructions must be followed at all times, as per the Club Bye-Laws.

All staff, visitors, members and students of QM should always adhere to the QMSC Club Bye-Laws, QM Code of Conduct, relevant QM Standard Operating Procedures and QM Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. All are available at request or on the Club Website (with the exception of the QM Standard Operating Procedures, which are available on the secured Staff website)

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health and Safety Policy Statement

It is the policy of Queen Mary Sailing Club that the health and safety of all staff and persons on site, including those afloat and those undertaking RYA Training, is paramount and the content of the SOPs and other documents clearly demonstrates our commitment to this.

QM Safety Policy

The QM Safety Policy should be understood, complied with and promoted by all.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments, which are updated when necessary, are on the main website.

Public and Employers' Liability Insurance

QM has, and will maintain at all times, employers' and public liability cover for all staff operating on behalf of QM.

Visiting Coaches / Powerboat Drivers Insurance

Private Coaches and visiting Class Coaches should ensure they are covered by an appropriate insurance policy (either personally or through the organisation they are representing) covering their coaching activity at QM and is likely to need to include Personal Public Liability and Personal Professional Indemnity insurance. QM is not able to offer guidance on adequate insurance, please liaise with the RYA Legal Department for further guidance.

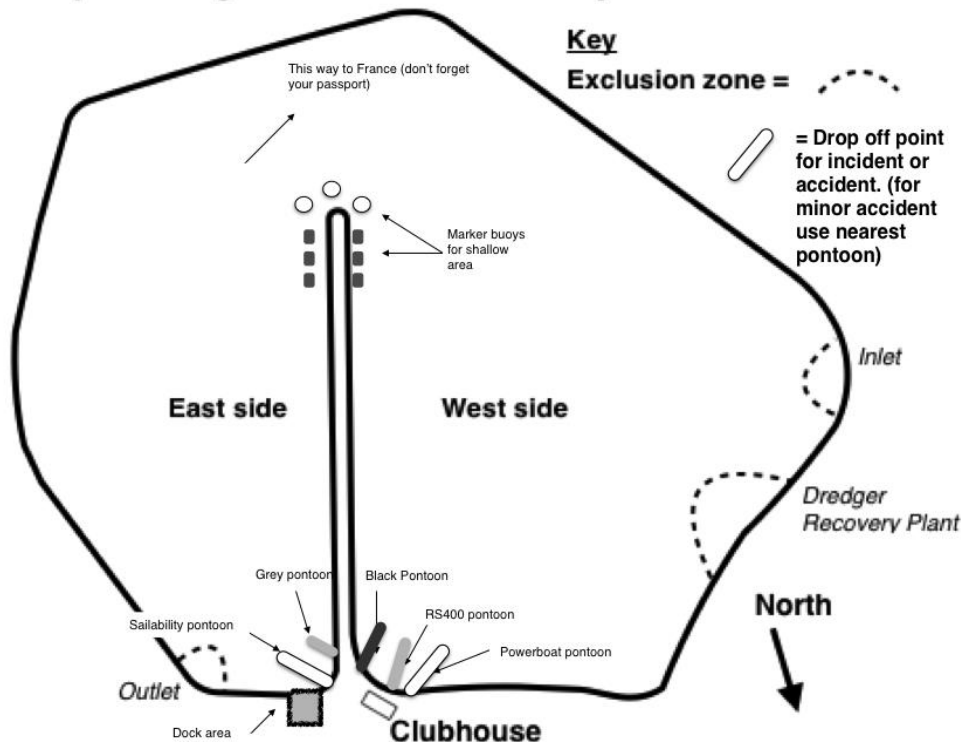
Access to QM and its grounds

QM is a members' club that is only open to persons enquiring about, purchasing or participating in its services. QM is a tenant of Thames Water under a long-term lease. Only the water and the grounds of the boat park are accessible, therefore walking around the reservoir is strictly not permitted. Except for guide dogs, dogs are not allowed on site. Staff must pass on their concerns to the DO if a person on site is acting suspiciously.

OPERATING AREA & LOCAL HAZARDS AT QM

Generally QM has very few hazards – no tides, shallow areas, fisherman etc, however we do have a few outlined below that all staff & visitors should be made aware of. On any given day the Duty Officer will liaise over specific operating areas for groups and general sailors.

Operating Area - Queen Mary Reservoir



(A copy of this is available in the staff room and in all the QM powerboat safety barrels)

Dredger Exclusion Zones

Dredgers on the reservoir have a large 'Exclusion Zone' around them marked by orange or large yellow spherical buoys. It is forbidden to enter Exclusion Zones (except to remove persons or equipment in that area). All staff should do their best to promote this to all water-users.

Outlet

The water outlet is on the East Side of the reservoir, where the Victorian-style bridge protrudes into the water. There is a chance of some currents in this area, and as such it has been marked by a ring of yellow exclusion buoys. All persons should avoid this area. It is advised that no-one enters the water within around 20 meters of the Outlet. If this is unavoidable, you must stay with your vessel and call for help. All staff should do their best to promote this to all water-users.

Barges

Barges operating on the reservoir have the right of way over all other craft. A loaded barge may weigh 350 tonnes, making it difficult to manoeuvre. It is not permitted for any staff or water-users to manoeuvre too closely or pass directly in front of a barge. Staff should endeavour to promote this to all water-users. Whilst the barges do not operate regularly any more, they may be used without warning, so all staff should be vigilant.

Bund

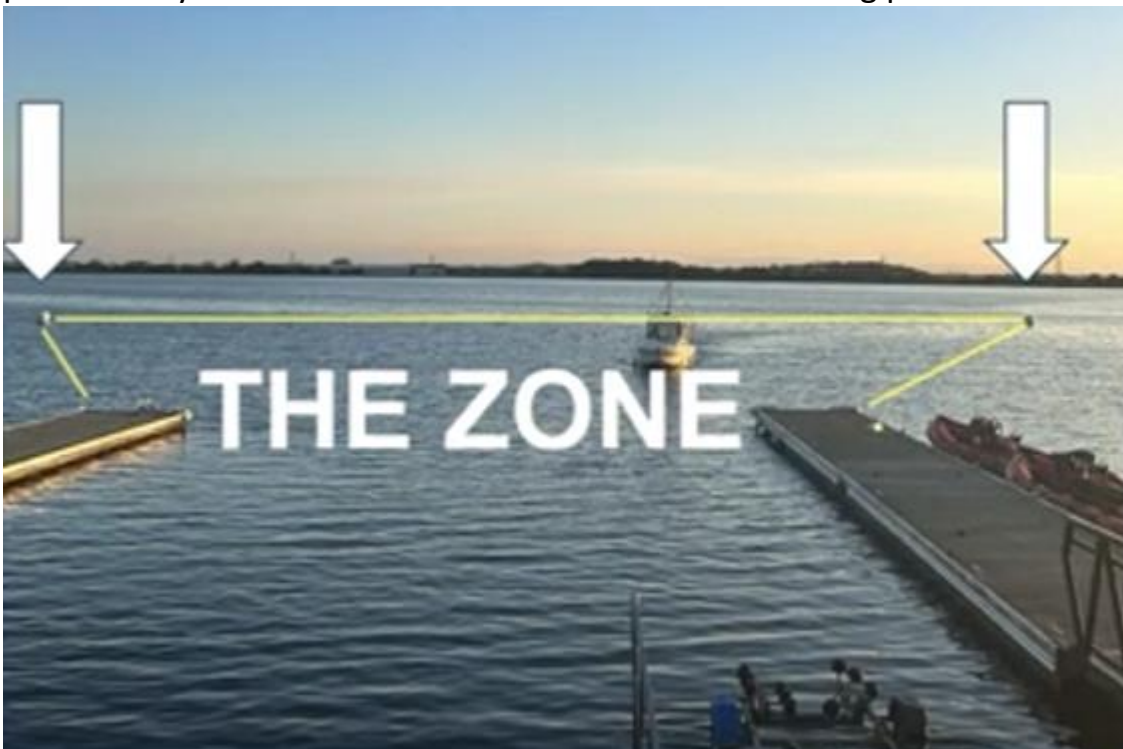
The bund is currently being excavated, resulting in an underwater hazard protruding further along the bund than what you can visually see. It is marked with yellow buoys, and within this area there is a very high chance of grounding. Caution must be taken for craft upwind of this area.

Low water

When the water is low, additional hazards may appear on the water or on the banks. These will be marked by a circle of yellow exclusion markers and its position noted on the Daily Information Board

West Side Pontoons

A box drawn from the ends of the two larger pontoons on the west side and two large white buoys on the water ('the zone'). Sail powered craft operating in this area should not pass directly in front of the direction of travel of a moving powerboat driving in this area.



VHF COMMUNICATIONS



VHF radios or walkie-talkies should be carried by all staff, coaches and powerboat drivers in accordance with the guidance here. Radios

must not be left lying around and must be looked after carefully, kept as dry as possible and secured onto person or boat.

Any lost, damaged or faulty radios must be reported to the DO and removed from service. Anyone found to have lost or be neglecting VHF radios may be charged for a replacement.

The main operating channel is P4 with alternative channels occasionally used in addition. Please adhere to the following general rules for VHF etiquette at QM:

- Identify who you are calling twice, followed by identifying yourself i.e.
'Duty Officer, Duty Officer, this is Safety 1. Over.'
- Press the PTT button and wait a second or 2 before starting your communication
- No general chit chat or banter – concise communication only
- No swearing or bad language

CARE MUST BE TAKEN TO AVOID LEANING ON THE PRESS-TO-TALK (PTT) BUTTON AS THIS CAN CANCEL-OUT ALL OTHER COMMUNICATIONS.

This is a public channel, so please bear in mind other staff and students can hear what you say.

Call-signs

- Queen Mary office: "QM"
- Duty Officer: "Duty Officer"
- Individual names and/or group names will be used to identify individuals on the water

LAUNCH & RECOVERY

QMSC is fortunate to have access to 700 acres of deep water but access is only via a steep 19° slope, over bricks which can be uneven and slippery at the water's edge or after heavy rain. Risk of slipping when launching/recovering dinghies or other equipment can be mitigated in the following ways:

1. Bank launch/recovery

Only appropriate for small dinghies (ILCA or smaller), or kayaks/boards

- Never launch or recover a dinghy by yourself
- Use a painter for all dinghies!
- Traverse the bank at an angle, rather than straight up or down
- If you must stop, leave equipment perpendicular to the slope

- Use the matting at the water's edge to protect equipment and for extra grip underfoot
- Use slipways to access the bank, instead of stepping off the ledge carrying equipment

2. Winch launch/recovery

Winches can be used for all dinghies and should be the first option at low water or for any double hander/larger single hander. Staff members may insist on using winches rather than going down the bank for any reason.

- Winches can be found on the three slipways on the western side of the dinghy park
- Winches should only be used by those familiar with the system. All QM instructors are winch trained.

- To launch:

- Clip the carabiner to the dinghy trolley
- Load the winch with two turns, clockwise
- Sailor pushes the dinghy to the edge of the slope, allowing gravity to load up the winch as the dinghy is pushed onto the slope
- Ensure all loose lines (e.g. halyards, MHF lines) are secured
- The winch handler controls the speed of descent, the sailor the direction
- When at the water's edge, the sailor can untie the dinghy and take it to the bank/pontoon, the winch handler can recover the trailer and winch line

- To recover:

- The sailor clips the winch to the dinghy trolley
- Winch handler loads the winch with three turns, clockwise, then into the auto tailer if fitted
- After a confirmation between sailor and handler, the winch handler can use the electric foot pedal to power the winch
- The dinghy will be very heavy to start with as it still wants to float level to the water, until the centre of effort reaches the slope
- Winch handler takes the load of the dinghy, the sailor steers from the bow

- General points:

- Ensure you hold the winch line with your palm always facing towards the winch, including when loading/unloading the line.
- When the winch is under load, the winch handler must also watch for passersby and warn them of the trip hazard caused by the winch line at ankle height.
- Be careful standing too close to the winch, as pulling upwards close to the winch will take turns off, increasing the load.

3. Hoist launch/recovery

Use the platform hoists for powerboats, catamarans, keelboats, or larger double handers. Hoists should only be operated by those trained – all QM instructors are hoist trained.

- There is one hoist on each side of the reservoir, by the 'Powerboat Pontoon' on the west side and 'Sailability Pontoon' on the east side.
- All craft on the hoist should be secured by two lines, one preventing the bow lifting and one preventing the boat rolling forwards.
- The hoist operator can power the hoist by turning it on at the hoist box (green button), and off again at the control box (red button or by shutting the door).
- The hoist operator can raise or lower the hoist by moving the lever in either direction.
- When the boat is out of the water, the hoist should be stopped and a second person boards the hoist platform to either secure or untie the boat from its trolley. Once this person has stepped off the hoist platform, movement can continue. People must not ride the hoist for any longer than necessary.
- When lowering the hoist, every care must be taken to avoid the hoist cable going slack. If the cable does go slack, immediately stop the hoist and ask for assistance from the Bosun or DO. Do not raise the hoist as this can damage the hoist cable. The east side hoist will continue to move if the hoist operator releases the lever, so every care must be taken that the hoist does not lower too far.

WEATHER

The DO will pull anyone off the water if concerned about the welfare of the individual/group. The main flagpole will fly a red flag when conditions are F5 or above to warn water users of strong winds.

QM POLICY FOR AVOIDING THE RISK OF A LIGHTNING STRIKE AFLOAT



Remove students from the water when an electrical storm appears to be in very close proximity. The club flag should be lowered as a signal to those free-sailing that the water is closed. Removing those free-sailing from the water should only be done if necessary and there is no risk to safety crews in doing so. The decision to postpone or abandon racing due to the risk of a lightning strike rests with the Race Officer in charge, in consultation with the Duty Officer and the main safety boat helm.

The Duty Officer can reopen the water 15 minutes after the last nearby lightning strike, or if they are confident the front has passed.

FIRE PROCEDURES

The Assistant Manager (House) or the next most senior member of the office will be the Fire Marshall in the event of a fire alarm and direct the clearing of the building, calling of the emergency services etc.

FIRE EVACUATION POINT (FEP): JUST ALONG THE ROAD FROM THE TOP OF THE STEPS TO THE LOWER CAR PARK – BY THE GREEN MUSTER POINT SIGN

If you discover a fire, sound the fire alarm by breaking the glass on any alarm box and shout 'FIRE FIRE FIRE'. Make your way to the FEP and inform the DO or Fire Marshall as soon as possible.

On hearing the fire alarm, if on land please make your way (with your students if applicable) to the FEP and await further instructions. If you are water based, then please listen out on the VHF for directions from the DO and get all students safe by either:

- Sailing to the pontoon & awaiting further instructions
- Sailing to mooring bouys & awaiting further instructions
- Abandoning boats and making way to the pontoon/bank & awaiting further instructions

Fire evacuation tests may be practiced from time to time, it is important to treat ALL fire alarms as genuine alarms.

EXPLOSIVE DEVICE PROCEDURES

Very occasionally, in the past, an object has been extracted from the reservoir that was suspected to be an unexploded World War 2 bomb. The above fire procedures should apply equally to such a device and any other object or package suspected to be an explosive device. In the event of discovery, make no attempt to approach or touch the suspected explosive device, and inform the DO.

BOMB EVACUATION POINT: AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS TO THE LOWER CAR PARK

FIRST AID, ACCIDENT & INCIDENT REPORTING

All qualified RYA Instructors and some other staff are trained first-aiders. First Aid kits/boxes are located in the office, the workshop and in powerboat safety barrels. Two defibrillators are located outside the office, by the front desk. Eye baths are located in the workshop and the fuel store. A nominated full-time member of staff is responsible for the checking and replenishment of all first aid supplies.

QM HELMET POLICY

Please refer to the relevant section in the Training School SOPs, as well as the Head Injury Policy below.

QM HEAD INJURY POLICY



ALL KNOCKS TO THE HEAD MUST BE TREATED SERIOUSLY WITH THE DUTY OFFICER INFORMED IMMEDIATELY.

A major head injury needs to be treated in accordance with the Emergency Operating Procedures for a Major Accident. All other head injuries need to be treated in line with the 'Information and advice for minor head injury' form, available in the accident folder.

All accidents where FA has been administered to be recorded via the online Accident Form, QR code in the QM Accident Folder in the office.

All other accidents, incidents (anything beyond the ordinary) & near misses to be recorded online on the 'Incident and Near Miss' and 'Hazard Report' forms (accessed via QR codes in the office) and the Duty Officer informed.

Actions to be taken by QM staff/volunteer who come across an incident

Defibrillators are kept outside the OFFICE by the FRONT DESK and Grab & Go First Aid Kit is located on the wall under the till, alongside the Emergency Action Plan Folder. All three of these may be required at the site of the incident.

Minor: Stabilise, treat, report

Major: Follow next steps...

- CALL for backup/Duty Officer using the following code:
 - **CODE RED, CODE RED.** This will inform the DO there is a potentially life-threatening incident underway.
- The Duty Officer will need to know...
 - **Who you are**
 - **Where you are**
 - On the water or on shore
 - East side / west side
 - What PB you are in

- **Type of situation**
 - Are the emergency services needed?
 - If you need any additional help (i.e. to pull someone out of the water)
 - Whether the DE-FIB is needed
- **Safety situation of other students/group around you**
 - Stabilise/treat the situation as best you can
 - As soon as the DO arrives they will take over the incident
 - Follow instructions of the DO

If you hear a **CODE RED** and you are not directly involved in the incident, please avoid all unnecessary radio communications and maintain the safety of your group/environment. The Duty Officer will oversee the allocation of staff to assist with the incident should it be necessary. Your priority is to maintain the safety of those under your care.

[end]