

What It Takes To Be A Branch Instructor



The ScotSAC Branch Instructor (BI) qualification is the first rung of the ScotSAC Instructor ladder allowing BIs to instruct new members of their own branch. Being an instructor brings a new dimension to diving; it lets you pass on your own enthusiasm for the sport and see new divers learn and develop. During the BI course and training, you will learn the basic skills needed to instruct diving safely, and in a way that is fun. You should be keen to relay your own knowledge to others and help them to grasp the skills they need to enjoy the sport. It will be hard work at times but it is very rewarding. In the end it will have been your training that gave your branch that newly qualified and competent diver.

Why should I become a Branch Instructor?
Think back to your own training; it was most likely an instructor who gave up his/her own time to teach you a great deal of what you now know. The future of the ScotSAC branch environment relies on volunteers to become instructors and continue to deliver the training to new members.

About the award
The Branch Instructor award consists of a number of components, beginning with a course day. The series of lectures cover topics such as diver safety, child protection, ScotSAC training schedule, and the role of a BI. Interactive sessions allow candidates time to discuss and practice some of the new skills.

Prior to attending the BI course day, candidates must first satisfy a number of pre-requisites. This ensures a suitable level of diving experience along with the some of the core skills required by an instructor. These include the ability to lead dives, and a greater awareness of safety, emergency procedures and decompression.

The BI course day is only the beginning but will provide you with a range of skills and knowledge to allow hands on experience, working under supervision and supporting your own Branch Diving Officer. When both your BDO and Regional Coach feel you are ready, you can complete the necessary assessments to gain the award. Two pool and two open water assessments are conducted during regular branch training sessions and observed by your Regional Coach and Diving Officer. At this point you should be comfortable with teaching trainees within your branch.

In line with the ScotSAC policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults, all new instructor candidates must complete an Enhanced Disclosure check via the Central Registered Body for Scotland (CRBS) prior to completion of the

award. It is important to note that the disclosure must be registered to ScotSAC and conducted at the time of the award. As a voluntary body, disclosures are conducted at no cost to ScotSAC or the candidate.

In order to ensure standards across ScotSAC, all BI candidates must complete the entire award within 12 months. Candidates who, for any reason, have not completed both pool and open water assessments are invited to attend a further BI course day free of charge, allowing a further 12 months prior to completion.

Already an instructor with another organisation?

We realise there are many members each year who join from other diving organisations, often with previous teaching experience. Although we are unable to crossover instructors directly, a number of crossover options are available, depending on experience. Any new members who wish to have previous experience recognised should contact the BI Course Director via ScotSAC HQ.

Cost

The cost of attending the BI course is only £35 which includes course materials and logbook.

Pre-requisites to course attendance

- Hold current membership of the Scottish Sub-Aqua Club;
- Have been a ScotSAC Sports Diver for at least 18 months;
- Hold current medical certificate;
- Be aged 18 or over (unless recommended by RC);
- Have at least 75 correctly logged dives;
- Have completed the Master Diver 'dive leader' endorsement;
- Have attended the Master Diver lectures on Safety and Emergency Procedures and Advanced Decompression Theory;

- Have the recommendation of the Branch Diving Officer (BDO);
- Have the recommendation of the Regional Coach. This prerequisite is desirable for most candidates, but essential for those recommended by 'acting' BDO's.

Scope of the award

- Complete the one-day SSAC Branch Instructor Course organised and set by the NDC;
- Complete two practical pool sessions of at least one-hour sessions under supervision of your Diving Officer and Regional Coach or nominated RI. (or above);
- Complete 2 practical open water sessions under supervision of your Diving Officer and Regional Coach or nominated RI (or above)
- Have completed a successful Enhanced Disclosure check via Scottish Criminal Records Office. Disclosure must be registered to ScotSAC.

Course Dates

Dates for the BI course are now available at a range of locations. Further courses and locations can be made available subject to demand, so if your branch (or local branches) has a group of willing candidates we will aim to accommodate where possible.

July 15, 2006 - ScotSAC HQ, Glasgow
 Sept 02, 2006 - Napier Uni, Edinburgh
 Sept 30, 2006 - Aberdeen
 Dec 02, 2006 - Dumfries
 Jan 27, 2007 - ScotSAC HQ, Glasgow

Other dates may be available subject to demand. All courses require a minimum number and may be re-scheduled. Contact the Branch Instructor Course Director via HQ for further information.

How do I book?

Contact SSAC HQ to obtain a copy of the course booking form and recommendation form to be completed by your Branch Diving Officer. Both forms are also available at www.scotsac.com

Recent Course

The latest BI course took place on 20th May 20, held at ScotSAC HQ, Glasgow. 14 candidates from branches including Solway, Carlisle, Ayr, Larkhall, Bo'ness and Kelvin took part in the fun filled day.



A Candidate's Tale

Charlie McGurk, Stirling University (pictured overpage), tells us about his experience as a Branch Instructor candidate ...

IF THERE'S one thing that I regret about my diving history, it's that I didn't start when I was a bit younger. Truth is that I didn't have the time and opportunity to give the sport a try until I started a postgraduate degree and became aware of the presence of our university's sub-aqua club.

Upon attending my first meeting (with some trepidation), it was immediately evident how welcoming and obliging the members were (despite me being the wrong side of 30)! In particular, the branch instructors were always willing to pass on their knowledge and expertise while displaying commendable levels of patience in guiding trainees along the route to becoming Sport Divers and beyond.

The nature of our club means that there's a high throughput of members, with up to 20 trainees signing up at the start of the semester. The role of BI is therefore intrinsic in the development of the membership. So, when our BDO suggested that I should consider undertaking training to become a BI, I felt both flattered and also a bit daunted. This seemed a great opportunity to contribute positively to the club while also gaining personal reward by improving my own diving skills. Probably more importantly, the satisfaction of guiding elated trainees through their formative dives would be hard to beat.

Alongside a group of other candidates, I attended a very useful BI training course at ScotSAC HQ. It was great to share experiences with other divers from quite different club setups. This helped to reinforce the motivation for becoming a BI while also highlighting both the rewarding nature of the post and the commensurate level of responsibility. It made me realise that I had a lot to learn before becoming an instructor.

Fortunately, our merry band of BIs were happy to let me shadow them in both pool and open water sessions and I picked up lots of important lessons through this process. Of course, watching is one thing, while having a go yourself is quite different. So, the next stage involving instruction of trainees under the supervision of a BI was highly constructive - certainly for me, and hopefully to some extent for the trainees!

Initially, it proved a bit tricky to become fully reacquainted with the ScotSAC training schedule, but the other BIs and the training literature helped to resolve any shortcomings. Our BDO and Regional Coach were always very accommodating; I always felt that I had their support. There was never a particular feeling of being judged or under pressure, but more that any issues

could be addressed fully and then resolved.

Unsurprisingly, the whole procedure proved positive for my own diving. I decided to undertake Master Diver training at the same time and found that there was a good synergy between the two awards. Practising shared ascents and rescue drills are exercises of obvious importance and yet had not been undertaken since I qualified as a Sport Diver.

The buddy system means that we all would probably like to think of ourselves as considerate divers. However, having a novice completely entrusting their safety to you is not a light undertaking, but concentrates the mind to ensure that diving practices are as safe as possible. So the combination of regular diving, repeated practice of skills and the impetus to become better educated about diving (being prepared to deal with queries from trainees) all should produce a better and more rounded diver.

Being trained as an instructor also allows the development of so-called 'transferable skills'. I'm lucky enough to carry out some teaching duties (something which I really enjoy) within my university job, but I've seen some of the younger BIs really flourish on a personal level throughout their training. Becoming something of an authority in a subject (any subject) can't help but bolster self-confidence, and it's been interesting to see some apparently quiet individuals becoming highly confident erudite instructors.

Becoming a key member of a team is also gratifying and motivating. But what really makes it all worthwhile is seeing the joy on trainees' faces; whether it's coming out after their first open water dive or getting their rescue signed off, their enthusiasm is contagious - and maybe a bit addictive!

The final part of the BI training process comprises assessments in the pool and open water. It could be imagined that these could be somewhat intimidating, but in fact they're a progression from previous exercises. Although the Regional Coach is monitoring your performance, it's not a high pressure exam situation. It's more a case of carrying out what you've been taught and making sure that everyone has an enjoyable safe dive.

I hope to have the opportunity to act as a BI in our club for years to come. I see it as an opportunity to help the club while also keeping my enthusiasm for the sport fresh. Hopefully, if I manage to get a couple more signatures in my book to allow me to become MD grade, I'd also have the potential to help other club members achieve that award.

As far as I can see, continuing development of diver skills within the branch is of benefit to everyone, so if I can play a small part in that process I'll be quite content. I may not be able to turn back the clock to have started my own diving at a younger age, but at least I can help others to do so!"