

I'm not an instructor trainer. I'm not even the most experienced instructor the club has. You may find better sources of information than this - this just reflects my experiences of doing the PIE augmented by what subsequent candidates have told me happened to them. I hope others find it useful.

What to expect

There will be an initial brief meeting just to outline the day. You'll then be put into a group of probably 3 students and one Instructor Trainer who will be assessing you. Your group will be assigned to work in a particular area of the site, away from the other groups. Your IT will then assign you a lesson to teach and tell you what order the lessons will be taught in.

You will then have about 30 minutes before the first lesson in which to suit up, assemble your aqualung prepare your lesson and present for the exam. NB there will be no gaps between the lessons so even if you are last in the running order you need to prep your lesson in this initial 30 mins. Obviously there won't be time to fully prep a lesson in this time so I strongly suggest that you have already prepped all possible lessons in advance so that you can spend these few minutes copying the relevant plan to your slate and considering the consequences of doing the lesson in the exact site that you have to use.

Each of you will then have 45 minutes to deliver your lesson. That includes all the time for a SEEDS brief, kit up, dry-run, safe entry into the water, traverse to your lesson site, descend, do the lesson, ascend, traverse back to the exit, safely exit the water, dekit, REAP debrief. This is very little time indeed so you have to plan very carefully how you will best use it.

As mentioned, you won't get a break until all the lessons have been delivered so you will be fairly tired by the end of that. You may still not get much of a break after the lessons - but that is your best chance to get a cup of coffee and a snickers bar down your neck.

At some point you will then be called on to do a rescue demonstration. This will involve submerging to about 0.5m to do the end of a CBL, make buoyant, call for help, jettison weights, rescue breaths for 1 minute and then tow. For avoidance of doubt, covid doesn't exist anymore so these will be proper rescue breaths. I recommend that you practice this skill in the pool the week before attending the PIE.

There will then be a final brief washup meeting where they tell you how long it will take for the results to come through.

Equipment

Keep it as simple as possible. Wear what you would wear to teach in the pool (plus exposure protection).

Make sure you bring anything that you might need for one of the lessons though – don't assume you can borrow anything. That includes any spares that you might need, e.g. why not bring 2 compasses in case you have to do the compass lesson, the kit necessary to make a datum line etc.

Lesson Topics

You will be given one of the skills from the OD/SD course. Note that this won't be a full lesson – just a section. The latest info we have (April 2025) is that the lesson will be one of the below, however you are well advised to prep lessons that include every skill from OD and SD:

- *Buoyancy (OO1 IM pages 16-25)* [I would take this to include trim](#)
- *Mask clearing, DV clear and retrieve (OO1 IM pages 21-23)*
- *AS use and ascent (OO2 IM pages 17-20)*

- *Controlled buoyant lift with no surface actions (OO3 IM pages 14-18)*
- *Mask clear, controlled breath, frog kick, 4-6m (OO4 IM pages 17-19)*
- *SMB – max depth 10m (SO2 IM pages 18-25)*
- *Distance Line and Simulated Deco – max depth 10m (SO3 IM pages 21-17)* IMO this is very unfair as it requires a lengthy dive planning session, a lengthy dry run, a suitable site, the “students” to each have slates and plenty of time underwater – so it clearly isn’t feasible. If I got it I would be very tempted to forget the deco aspect and just focus on use of a distance line, which clearly provides lots of easy opportunities for STEP. If taking on the deco aspect I’d do the planning very quickly (pretty much show them the tables and nudge them straight into a pre-prepared plan) and I’d make that plan have a single very short deco stop as that’s dead time spent on something where you can’t easily do P.
- *Compass use on surface and underwater (SO4 IM pages 21-24)* If you get this one then you can expect that, by the time you’ve done it in a dry run and on the water surface that there won’t be time to do much under the water. In Wraysbury that’s good as you don’t want to compromise S by getting lost in the silt.
- *DSMB deployment from the bottom (SO4 IM pages 25-31)*

Other skills appearing in the OD/SD syllabi (and hence IMO worth prepping) would be

- Buddy diving / leading (OO4)
- Rescue breaths and associated CBL surface actions (SO1)
- Towing/landing a casualty (SO1)
- Self/casualty weight belt jettison (OO3/OO4/SO2/SO5)
- SMB (SO2)

I strongly recommend that you plan out all of these potential lessons and make detailed notes for yourself. Then when you get assigned a lesson you just read through your notes to fix certain things in your mind and copy the salient points down onto your slate/wet notes.

Timing

You will only have 30 minutes to do a SEEDS brief, kit up, dry-run, safe entry into the water, traverse to your lesson site, descend, do the lesson, ascend, traverse back to the exit, safely exit the water, dekit, REAP debrief. That’s really not very long at all. You can bank on having less than 10 minutes underwater. That makes it challenging to do enough to demonstrate STEP.

With that in mind, don’t take on too much. Think of the smallest possible thing that you can do for each skill that will demonstrate progression (4 separate steps should do it) and focus on achieving that. Don’t worry that the whole skill might not be finished or polished – that will actually help by giving you things to talk about in the debrief.

STEP

You’ll be marked on STEP so make sure you hit the points.

- Safety
 - Brief the main points covered in the instructor notes and any site specific features (don’t labour this though – you have to crack on)
 - Make sure your students put on weights and kit correctly (helping each other and you)
 - The instructor enters the water first and exits last.
 - Make sure you and your students are masked and regged from before they enter the water until after they get out. Whip them into line if they transgress!
 - NB this means absolutely no talking on the water surface

- Keep everyone together.
 - If you are doing a surface swim to a bouy make them hold an SMB which you tow out there. This can then be tied off on the bouy for later use when you swim back.
 - Make a show of making them get close together and away from platform edges for your demos
 - Obviously never leave a student anywhere – 1 up all up
 - If there is a shot line, keep near to it. If there isn't then set up a datum line.
- Think about the details of keeping people safe eg:
 - If you have to demo taking your mask off you won't be able to see your students – so make them hold onto your BC (and each other) before you start
 - If your student has to take their reg out make sure your octopus is in your hand and ready to shove into their mouth
 - If your students are doing a CBL have your hand ready to dump air from the casualty, to slow the ascent (I find it easiest to put my finger under the cord at the back of the BC rather than the actual valve because it's more accessible). If they are wearing a wing you don't have that option so you have to have your hand near the main control.
- Chose a site with appropriate depth and conditions
- Try to use a site with a shot (eg the platforms at Wraysbury) and stay near to it with your students able to see it as a visual reference. If your site won't have a shot then set up a datum line. I know this point appears twice – that's because it achieves many things.
- Technically correct
 - Make sure you do a dry run (but not too long – esp if fully kitted up)
 - Do all skills exactly as per the BSAC manual. You might know a much better, cleverer way of doing it - but this is not the time.
 - Position your students and yourself so that they can see the demos properly (you can make a bit of a show of this for the examiner's benefit).
 - You may require multiple demos so that all students can see a demo properly
 - For eg AS ascent you'll have to demo on each of 2 students so that everyone can see the demo
 - For mask clear you should demo facing one student and then the other so that they each see from front on and from sideways on
 - Make sure your signals are clear. Big slow signals that both students see and respond to.
 - Put your lesson notes on a slate or wet notes. Firstly this demonstrates to the IT that you're following recommended procedure and secondly, under the pressure of the occasion, it is remarkably easy to forget something simple that would have made all the difference. You won't have space to put everything on there but at least note a few things you might otherwise forget for the briefing/dryrun/debrief and put what your progressive steps are.
- Effective

- You demo a step, then both students mimic. Simple. Your job is not to show the IT how well you can do a skill, it's to show that you can make the students do the skill.
- Make sure your "students" are very clear on what you expect from them. Make very sure they can't misunderstand anything that might cause them to create a problem for you in the delivery of the lesson.
- If a student isn't quite there on a skill then repeat the demo emphasising the point that wasn't right. Even if the students are (as hopefully will be the case) doing the skills properly it's worth being a bit picky at least once and making them repeat just to demonstrate to the IT that you are being effective.
- Obviously never progress to the next step until the current step has been done properly
- Brief any signals that you might use. Don't assume that anything is obvious or well-known and don't use a signal that you didn't brief.
- Progressive
 - You'll need at least 3 separate progressive steps – but for timing reasons don't do too many. I suggest 4. Don't make the steps too complicated – in fact the smaller the better. Remember that you're not trying to actually teach anyone and it's not important to finish the skill – you're just trying to demonstrate to the IT that you can teach progressively.
 - Any step you're doing underwater could be practiced in the dry run. The dry run is part of doing things progressively and it should be progressive too.
 - It's (sadly) quite possible that one of your instructor candidate "students" is totally useless and can't do one of your steps. Don't be phased by this – plan for it – it is after all a realistic scenario in an actual lesson. What you need to do in this case is break it down to smaller steps that they can do. This is your only option because you won't get the mark for progressive unless you get them through separate steps but you won't get the mark for effective if you plough on before they've done it properly.

My final tip is to read the guidance here and, especially, watch the videos of their demonstration lessons:

[Instructor exam support - British Sub-Aqua Club \(bsac.com\)](https://www.bsac.com/instructor-exam-support)

I found these pretty useful in terms of understanding what they are expecting.