

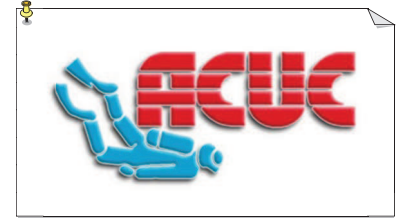
Open Water Diver Standards

ACUC - OPEN WATER
DIVER STANDARDS

v0422

Special consideration points

- *This is the first mandatory level of the ACUC training ladder*
- *Open Water Divers should be advised not to dive deeper than 25 meters until they have gained experience*
- *This course is equivalent to ISO Autonomous Diver (24801-2)*



Introduction

The ACUC Open Water Diver is the **first** mandatory level on the ACUC training ladder. This course can be taught by any ACUC Divemaster or higher, but must be evaluated and certified by any ACUC Entry Level Instructor or higher level. The main characteristics of this course are that candidates who successfully complete the course will be properly trained and will be able to dive, without supervision, accompanied by divers of any level, to the maximum depth allowed in recreational diving, which is 40 meters / 130 feet. **However, Open Water Divers should not exceed a depth of 25 meters / 80 feet, until they have gained experience** (done at least 20 dives or completed the ACUC Deep Diving specialty). In any case, the maximum depth for children under 16 years of age will be 25 meters / 80 feet. ACUC reminds Instructors and divers that those who do not wish to be trained to this depth (25 meters / 80 feet), can opt for the ACUC Scuba Diver course (see [ACUC Scuba Diver standards](#))

This is an ACUC International standard and therefore is always subject to the different national or local legislations. In cases where legislations exist that differ from this standard, the ACUC country or area delegation if it exist, must request in writing to the ACUC main office a “**Deviation**” from this standard to satisfy the legislation of the area, supporting their request with the appropriate documentation. Deviations, if requested, to be considered valid, must appear at the end of each specific standard document. In cases where the local or national legislations are more restrictive than the ACUC Standard, then the local legislation will prevail, but if the ACUC Standard is more restrictive, then the ACUC Standard will prevail, because by complying with the more restrictive ACUC Standard, logically the local legislation will be also complied with.

Regarding required training hours, none are specified because these could vary depending on many factors (number of candidates, diving environment, etc), therefore the training hours needed are dependant on the fulfilment of learning objectives. In the ACUC manuals and documents where hours are specified, these are only to be considered recommendations.

1. Scope

This Standard specifies safety related minimum competencies to be achieved in recreational scuba training at the ACUC Open Water Diver level. This Standard applies only to contractual training and certification in recreational scuba diving.

2. Definitions

For definitions, please see this [page](#)

3 Competencies

An ACUC Open Water Diver will be trained to have sufficient competencies through knowledge, skills, and experience to dive with other certified divers of any level in open water. ACUC Open Water Divers will dive within the following parameters:

- Dive to a maximum depth of 40 meters / 130 feet (maximum of 25 meters / 80 feet until the diver has gained experience or is over 16 years of age)
- Only dive when appropriate surface support is available.
- Diving under conditions that are equal to or better than the conditions in which they were trained.



ACUC - OPEN WATER DIVER STANDARDS

If accompanied by an ACUC instructor, a certified ACUC Open Water Diver can gain progressive experience beyond these parameters (except depth) and develop proficiency managing dives with more challenging conditions designed to earn higher certifications. Where additional experience is required, this can be provided by an appropriately qualified ACUC Divemaster. Where additional instruction is required, it can only be provided by a suitably qualified ACUC instructor.

4 Training prerequisites

In order to qualify for enrolment in a course according to this Standard, the candidate shall meet the following prerequisites:

4.1 Minimum age: 12 years. The consent of parents or guardians is required when the candidate is a minor. (The definition "minor" will be according to the legislation of each country). Candidates under the age of 16 who pass the course will be awarded a Junior Open Water Diver certification.

4.2 Health requirements: Candidates must pass a medical examination suitable for recreational diving, or if the legislation of the country where the course takes place allows it, fill in an appropriate questionnaire. In case of doubt, candidates should be referred to an appropriate doctor. If the candidate is not examined by a doctor, the candidate shall be required to confirm, by signing it, written information given by the instructor about illnesses or physical conditions that may be a risk related to diving. Candidates will be advised on the importance of appropriate regular medical examinations.

4.3 Know how to swim.

5 Training Instructor: Candidate ratios

- **Theory (classroom or pool):** No limit
- **Confined water:**
 - Exercises without equipment or with light equipment: 12 candidates per instructor, with an additional 6 candidates per certified Divemaster, with an absolute maximum of 24 candidates.
 - Exercises with heavy equipment (scuba): 8 candidates per Instructor, with an additional 4 candidates per o certified Divemaster with an absolute maximum of 16 candidates.
- **Open Water:** 4 candidates per Instructor, with an additional 2 candidates per certified Divemaster with an absolute maximum of 8 candidates.

6 Initial information

The following information shall be made available to the candidates prior to, or during the first class.

- Prerequisites according to 4,
- Limitations of eventual qualification,
- Scope of course,
- Course procedures,
- Costs, insurance and contractual issues according to national regulations,
- Equipment requirements,
- Certification requirements according to point 10,
- Diving related legislation and legal requirements.

7 Course content related to theory knowledge

7.1 Equipment: Candidates will have an intermediate level of theory knowledge about the use and handling of diving equipment.

7.2 Physics of Diving: Candidates will have an intermediate level of theory knowledge on:

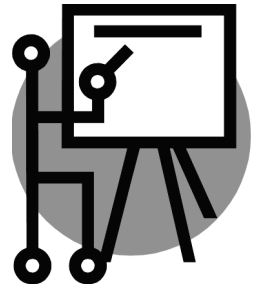
- Matter
- Buoyancy
- Light
- Sound
- hand signals
- Air Components



- Pressure
- Gas Laws
 - Boyle
 - Dalton
 - Henry
 - Charles

7.3 Diving Physiology: Candidates will have an intermediate level of theoretical knowledge on:

- Barotrauma
- Basic Anatomy
 - The human body
 - Abdomen
 - Chest
 - Ears
 - Sinuses
 - Decongestants
 - Dental Compression
 - Mask Compression
- Descent Physiology
 - Nitrogen Narcosis
 - Oxygen poisoning
 - Carbon Dioxide Poisoning
 - Carbon Monoxide Poisoning
- Ascent Physiology
 - Air Embolism
 - Emphysema
 - Pneumothorax
 - Expansion of gases in stomach and intestines
 - Dizziness
 - Decompression sickness
- Related Physiology
 - Lipoid pneumonia
 - Hypothermia
 - Drugs and alcohol



*“The
minimum age
is 12 years”*

7.4 Diving Environment: Candidates will have a basic level of theoretical knowledge about the local and general conditions of the diving environment and their possible effects on the diver, as well as the diver's impact on the environment, including:

- The Marine Environment
 - Saltwater
 - Sun
 - Currents
 - Waves
 - Shore Topography
 - Navigation
 - Marine life
 - Considerations and Interrelation
- Marine Conservation
 - Wrecks
 - Fish
- Freshwater Environment
 - Fresh water
 - Lakes
 - Rivers
 - Quarries
 - Natural caves
 - Siphons and springs



- Mines
- Common freshwater animals
- Ecology
 - Sources of problems
 - Coastal problems
 - Industry
 - Impact of recreational diving
 - Inland water problems
 - Solutions

7.5 First Aid: Candidates will have a basic level of knowledge of First Aid, with an emphasis on accident prevention and including:

- Accident prevention
- General first aid
- Barotrauma
- Decompression sickness
- Other problems related to diving
- Heart attack

7.6 Rescue: Candidates will have a basic level of Rescue knowledge, with an emphasis on accident prevention and including:

- Underwater rescue
- Causes of diving problems
- Problem recognition
- Rescue techniques
- Self help
- Buddy help
- Diver rescue
- Panic
- Fatigue

7.7 Dive Planning: Candidates will have an intermediate level of knowledge of dive planning and preparation, including:

- Physical training
- Pre-Dive planning
- Pre-Dive preparation
- On-site preparation
- Dive plan
- Full decompression tables and procedures
- Air consumption (basic level)
- Descent
- At the bottom
- Ascent
- Altitude Diving (basic level)
- Diving with tides
- Diving and flying
- Dive Log

7.8 Job Opportunities: Candidates will have a basic level of knowledge about job opportunities, including:

- Recreational diving
- Light professional diving
- Heavy professional diving
- Sciences

7.9 ACUC: Candidates will have a basic level of knowledge about ACUC, including:

- What is ACUC
- Specialties available to Open Water Divers
- Information on other ACUC courses



8 Course contents related to diving skills

8.1 Confined Water Diving Skills: Candidates should be able to perform the following skills. Each skill must be mastered in confined water before that skill is performed in open water.

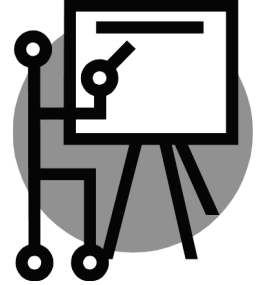
- Equipment use
- Tank Inspection
- Assembly and disassembly of diving equipment (at water's edge)
- Putting on and taking off the equipment
- Water Entry Methods
- Surface dives and exit
- Mouthpiece rinse - snorkel and regulator
- Regulator/snorkel exchanges, surface swimming
- Proper descent and ascent procedures (e.g. equalizing pressure in ears and mask)
- Underwater swimming (different methods)
- Rinsing of mask, including taking it off and putting it on
- Buoyancy control, underwater and on the surface
- Ascents and descents using the vest
- Simulated emergency ascents
- Underwater regulator recovery
- Basic instrument monitoring
- Surface and underwater operation of the quick release of the weight system
- Act as a donor and recipient of an alternative breathing gas source
- Equipment care
- Basic hand signals
- Buddy system
- Basic rescue exercises that include towing and assistance to victims.

8.2 Open Water Diving Skills: Candidates should be able to perform the following skills in conditions typical of the local environment.

- Equipment use
- Tank inspection
- Assembly and disassembly of diving equipment (at water's edge)
- Putting on and taking off equipment
- Water entry methods
- Surface dives and exit methods
- Mouthpiece rinse - snorkel and regulator
- Regulator/snorkel exchanges, surface swimming
- Proper descent and ascent procedures (e.g. equalizing pressure in ears and mask)
- Underwater Swimming (different methods)
- Mask clearing, including taking them off and putting them on

(*) Special safety precautions will be taken during the process of removing and putting on the mask in open water, specifically in areas with cold water.

- Buoyancy control, underwater and on the surface
- Ascents and descents with the vest
- Underwater regulator recovery
- Basic instrument monitoring
- Act as recipient and donor of an alternative breathing gas source
- Equipment care
- Basic hand signals
- Buddy system



“Divers should know what the limitations of their certification are”



9 Practical training parameters

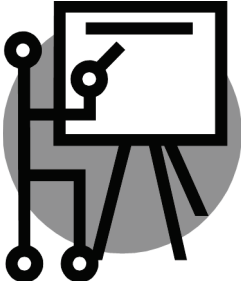
- 9.1** All confined water underwater skills will be introduced, directly supervised and evaluated by an ACUC instructor who will be in the water during each session. The diving instructor will be in direct control of the candidates throughout all sessions. Once introduced, the Instructor may use experienced divers to demonstrate the skills, but always under the direct supervision of the Instructor. The Instructor must be the one who evaluates the skills.
- 9.2** Prior to the first open water dive the candidate will demonstrate to a diving instructor the following aquatic skills, as preferred by the Instructor:
- 275 meter / 300 yard swim using mask, fins and snorkel, with no time limit and 10 minute survival float, without using any swimming aids. If a diving suit is used, the candidate must be neutrally buoyant on the surface, or
 - 180 meter / 200 yard swim, without swimming aids, using any type of method, and with no time limit and 10 minute survival float, without using any swimming aids. If a wetsuit is used, the candidate must be neutrally buoyant on the surface.
- 9.3** Before participating in open water dives, the candidate will have demonstrated in confined water sufficient theory knowledge and diving skills to be able to perform open water dives in the prevailing conditions.
- 9.4** The maximum depth during training dives will not exceed 25 meters / 80 feet
- 9.5** All open water training dives will be conducted during daylight hours in water that allows direct vertical access to the surface. Open water dives, therefore, will not be done in caves or under ice.
- 9.6** During open water dives the candidate will be equipped with at least the diving equipment according to point 2.9. (see [Definitions](#))
- 9.7** All open water underwater skills will be introduced and directly supervised by an ACUC Divemaster or Instructor and evaluated by an ACUC Instructor. The dive instructor will be in the water and in charge of each open water dive. During the first 4 open water dives, the Diving Instructor shall be in direct control of the candidates during the dives. During subsequent dives, candidates may be supervised by a Divemaster, except when skills are being evaluated.
- 9.8** According to clause 5, the absolute maximum number of candidates per diving instructor, under ideal conditions, for direct supervision and accompaniment under open water is four. The maximum number of candidates per qualified assistant for direct supervision and accompaniment under open water is two.
- 9.9** At no time should a candidate be left without direct supervision in or under the water.
- 9.10** Under no circumstances will groups of certified divers (certified diver as buddy of another certified diver and so on) and groups of students from an OWD course be allowed on the same dive, under the direct supervision of the same instructor.
- 9.11** Under no circumstances is it allowed to buddy up a certified diver with a student (unless said diver has the necessary certification — Divemaster as a minimum).
- 9.12** Before each dive the diving instructor will prepare an “emergency plan”. In the immediate vicinity of the dive site there will be:
- A proper first aid kit
 - An emergency oxygen unit with a capacity to deliver at least 15 l/min. For at least 20 min.
 - Adequate communication system to alert emergency services.
- 9.13** The diving instructor will cancel or abort the open water dive if environmental conditions or a candidate's physical or mental condition so require.
- 9.14** A maximum of 3 training dives per day will be allowed

10 Evaluation and certification requirements

10.1 Knowledge: The candidate will demonstrate, by means of a written exam (see note below) provided by ACUC, knowledge of diving theory according to point 7 and knowledge of skills according to point 8.

10.2 Scuba Skills: The candidate will satisfactorily demonstrate to an ACUC instructor the diving skills as per point 8.

Note: If for any reason, the candidate is unable to take a written exam, then the Instructor may give the candidate an oral exam based on the written exam provided by ACUC and if this is the case, the Instructor will transfer the candidate's oral answers to the written exam. In either case, the written examination must be completed, either directly by the candidate or indirectly by the Instructor, using the candidate's oral responses. Instructors may, if they wish, do additional exams to the candidate, however, the exam provided by ACUC must be taken.



“All skills must be evaluated by an Instructor, who must be in the water at each session”

11 Checkout dives

To become certified, candidates will complete at least four open water training dives under the direct supervision of an ACUC instructor. The underwater duration of each of these open water dives will be as indicated on the following pages.

Please note with reference to bottom times: the ISO standards for this level indicate that a minimum bottom time per dive of 15 minutes and a cumulative bottom time of 80 minutes is necessary to obtain certification. ISO standards do not differentiate with respect to water temperature. If you add the ACUC recommended bottom times for cold water, you will see that they add up to a total of 75 minutes. Therefore, if you do these course dives in cold water, take this into consideration and increase bottom time as necessary to meet ISO standards. ACUC recommends that if you have to do this, you do it on the first and/or second dive.

Instructors can perform more skill checks if they wish, however, the four listed dives must be performed and the defined skills must be checked, following the defined difficulty increase process. Also note that while reaching the listed minimum depths at some point during the dive on dives 2, 3 and 4 is mandatory, reaching the listed maximum depths is not mandatory.

12 Deviations

None requested



ACUC - OPEN WATER DIVER STANDARDS

Important Note: All skills must be directly supervised by an Instructor or Divemaster, but must be evaluated by an Instructor. **Skills marked with an asterisk (*) must be supervised ONLY by an Instructor.**

Since these are open water course dives, not confined water, if a skill is to be demonstrated, it must be demonstrated by an Instructor or Divemaster. The use of certified divers to demonstrate skills in open water course dives, who do not have one of the above certifications, is not permitted.

SKILLS TO BE CHECKED IN THE FIRST DIVE

Note: This first dive should be considered as an introduction to the environment, therefore, the exercises done should be simple, so as not to add stress to the candidate. The dive must be made in less than 12 meters / 40 feet of depth. Suggested bottom time is 30 minutes (25 minutes in cold water).

1. Use of equipment and weight adjustment
2. Tank check
3. Equipment assembly (out of the water)
4. Putting the equipment on (out of the water)
5. Water entry methods (Giant Step and Walking entrance from shore)
6. Surface dives (feet first)
7. Mouthpiece clearing - snorkel (Blow method)
8. Regulator / snorkel exchanges swimming at the surface
9. Cramp removal
10. Compass surface swim
11. (*) Proper descent procedures (for example: ear and mask equalization, etc.)
12. (*) Surface and underwater buoyancy control (pivoting method)
13. (*) Proper ascent methods (as examples: rotating during ascent, hand up, Ok signal, etc.)
14. Taking the equipment off (out of the water)
15. Equipment disassembly (out of the water)
16. Equipment care and dive log (including tables calculations)

SKILLS TO BE CHECKED IN THE SECOND DIVE

In this second dive, more complex skills of the candidates will be tested, however, it will be considered that this is only the second open water dive and therefore, unnecessary stress should not be added to the candidate. Some of the exercises of the first dive are repeated, to do a continuous evaluation. During this dive, the minimum depth of 6 meters / 20 feet must be reached at some point and the depth of 15 meters / 50 feet must not be exceeded. The bottom time is suggested to be 25 minutes (20 minutes in cold water).

1. Equipment assembly (out of the water)
2. Putting the equipment on (out of the water)
3. Water entry methods (Back roll and Sitting controlled entry)
4. Surface dives (Head first)
5. Mouthpiece clearing - snorkel (Displacement method)
6. (*) Proper descent procedures (as examples: equalize ear and mask pressures, etc.) - mask clearing in shallow water could be introduced
7. (*) Descent using the compensating vest
8. (*) Underwater buoyancy control (pivoting method)
9. Instruments checks (often) and basic hand signals
10. Underwater swimming (Bicycle and scissors kicks)
11. (*) Mouthpiece clearing - regulator (blowing)
12. (*) Act as donor and receiver of an octopus, or similar alternate air system
13. Underwater swimming with a compass
14. Proper ascent methods (as examples: rotating during ascent, hand up, Ok signal, etc.)
15. (*) Ascent using the compensating vest
16. Taking the equipment off (out of the water)
17. Equipment disassembly (out of the water)
18. Equipment care and dive log (including tables calculations)



ACUC - OPEN WATER DIVER STANDARDS

SKILLS TO BE CHECKED IN THE THIRD DIVE

In this third dive, more complex skills of the candidates will be tested. Some of the exercises from previous dives are repeated, to do a continuous evaluation. During this dive, the minimum depth of 9 meters / 30 feet must be reached at some point and the depth of 18 meters / 60 feet must not be exceeded. The bottom time it is suggested to be 20 minutes (15 minutes in cold water). Note: A written waiver may be obtained from ACUC when it is geographically difficult, if not impossible, to find bodies of water that do not meet the minimum depth requirement for this dive.

1. Equipment assembly (out of the water)
2. Putting the equipment on (out of the water)
3. (*) Proper descent procedures (as example: equalize ear and mask pressures, etc.)
4. (*) Descent with compensating vest
5. (*) Underwater buoyancy control (pivoting method)
6. Underwater swimming (Frog and dolphin kicks)
7. Frequent instruments monitoring
8. (*) Mouthpiece clearing - regulator (Purge button method)
9. (*) Underwater mask clearing, including taking it off and putting it back on. Note: special precautions must be observed during this exercise, specially in cold water
10. (*) Underwater regulator recovery (two methods: back reach and side reach)
11. (*) Ascent with compensating vest and safety stop
12. Proper ascent methods (as examples: rotating during ascent, hand up, Ok signal, etc.)
13. Surface tired diver tow
14. Taking the equipment off (out of the water)
15. Equipment disassembly (out of the water)
16. Equipment care and dive log (including tables calculations)

SKILLS TO BE CHECKED IN THE FOURTH DIVE

The fourth dive should be a relaxed, end-of-course dive, with minimum skills check. Some of the exercises from previous dives are repeated, to do a continuous evaluation. During this dive, the minimum depth of 9 meters / 30 feet must be reached at some point and the depth of 25 meters / 80 feet must not be exceeded (only in good conditions). Suggested bottom time: 15 minutes. Note: A written waiver may be obtained from ACUC when it is geographically difficult, if not impossible, to find bodies of water that do not meet the minimum depth requirement for this dive.

1. (*) Air consumption considerations and planning of this type of dives (25 metres / 80 feet)
2. Equipment assembly (out of the water)
3. Putting the equipment on (out of the water)
4. Buddy system (out of the water)
5. (*) Proper descent procedures (as example: equalize ear and mask pressures, etc.)
6. Buddy system (underwater)
7. (*) Underwater buoyancy control (pivoting method)
8. (*) Mouthpiece clearing - regulator (Purge button method)
9. Instruments checks often than normal (own and buddy's)
10. Proper ascent methods (as examples: rotating during ascent, hand up, Ok signal, etc.) and safety stop.
11. Taking the equipment off (out of the water)
12. Equipment disassembly (out of the water)
13. Equipment care and dive log (including tables calculations)