



Marlow Rowing Club

Sculling Proficiency Award Scheme

Version	2025/11
Status	Approved xxxx 2025. This is a club rule under Article 65 of the Articles of Association and binding on members
Documents Replaced: This document replaces the following documents which will cease to have effect from the date of this document:	Sculling Proficiency Award 2025/1 - Minor updates

Introduction

The implementation of the Sculling Proficiency Award Scheme at Marlow RC is primarily to ensure that local safety rules are understood and observed and that good watermanship skills are learned and practised.

This award is primarily aimed at users of 1x and 2x who will be steering themselves unaccompanied and therefore need to be self-sufficient. The Foot-Steer Award is required for those steering a 4x. For 4x+ there is a coxing award. Sculling PA is also relevant for crew of 4x when determining whether a crew as a whole are competent to go out in adverse conditions, under the **River Access & Navigation Safety Rules**.

‘Unaccompanied’ means without a coach in a launch or without a coach on the bank equipped with a throw line, radio and/or mobile phone. ‘Accompanied’ may also include a boat being looked after by a coach in a sculling boat alongside, provided they do not become separated.

The intention of the scheme is that progressing through the award levels demonstrates increasing competence to enable scullers to train on the water unaccompanied in ‘Green light’ conditions (Bronze), at night (Silver) or under ‘Amber light’ conditions (Gold).

Although the SPA also covers 2x, the assessments mileage requirements must be completed in a 1x. Adaptives can do the SPA in non-fine 1x, but their award only then covers non-fine boats and must be rested to move to fine boats. All others must do the test and mileage in a fine 1x.

Pre-Conditions

The following are pre-conditions to taking SPA at any level:

- Completion of Club Induction
- Passed Competence In the Water (i.e. Capsize Drill & Swim Test)
- Passed Club River Access & Navigation Assessment (can be concurrent with SPA assessment)
- Club member in good standing

Silver and Bronze can be taken concurrently. Gold can only be awarded after sufficient mileage has been obtained, post-Silver qualification.

What conditions you can go out in with different SPA awards is set out in the **River Access and Navigation Safety Rules** but in summary:

Bronze: Green light, daylight, above the lock

Silver: Green light, Day and Night, above the lock.

Gold: Green light, Day and Night. Amber, daylight. In either case, above/below the lock.

Refer to the policy for details, but remember that you always have to conduct your own risk assessment (see the **General Safety Policy**). Understanding those rules and the River Access & Navigation Policy is a key part of what experienced scullers should be learning during their progress. Scullers should not go below the lock until they can demonstrate competence or are doing so under the guidance of a coach or others with below-the-lock experience,

Juniors

Juniors may take the assessment and obtain the awards, but for juniors the awards do not permit them to go out unaccompanied - the general club rules apply. However, when a junior turns 18, the adult rules apply and they can go unaccompanied to the same extent as any adult with that award level.

Assessors

The Committee will appoint Award Assessors. In general, these will be British Rowing Level 2 qualified coaches or higher. Additional competent persons may also be appointed where the Committee deems it appropriate. Assessors will be listed in the **Authorised Roles** document.

Administration

The awards are to be taken in the correct order and no level may be bypassed unless agreed by the Club Captain and Safety Officer.

There is no external certification that is automatically transferable to the club SPA scheme, but the Captain and assessors can choose to allow people who they are satisfied have demonstrated sufficient experience (e.g. at another club, or in high level competition) to:

- Take multiple levels of the test concurrently; and/or
- Be assessed verbally and by proven experience elsewhere.

Evidence of capability on the navigation test will always be required, because the local safety rules of the river (warning lights, turning rules, circulation patterns, etc) must be understood by all members of the club. It is just as important for 'old hands' to be educated and informed as it is for newcomers to the club.

Record-Keeping and Publicity

In order to minimise paperwork and to keep centralised records, it is a requirement that the Safety Records Administrator, Membership Secretary and Safety Officer are informed whenever a candidate achieves a new level of competence. Their membership record on the central membership database can then be updated. Squads/coaches are also advised to keep a list of certified competent scullers. The Committee will publicise the scheme and communicate it as widely as possible to the membership to ensure understanding and compliance. The award scheme documentation will be published on the club website. Members are expected to complete their own signature sheets and Gold level logbook.

Implementation

The SPA has been operational for over 10 years. Changes in this (2024) reissue are minor.

Completion of the Adult Learn to Scull programme does not confer automatic Bronze status and all athletes must undergo a Bronze level test, once their coach deems them to be sufficiently Competent.

Assessments can be booked through the website, and lists of the currently approved assessors are in the **Authorised Roles** list (part of the Safety documents in the website).

Appeals and Complaints

The scheme is administered by the Captain and Safety Officer for the directors. Appeals, complaints and comments should be addressed to the Captain through the athlete's squad representative.

Levels of Award

Bronze Award

Completion of Bronze level enables the sculler to go afloat above the lock according to the **River Access and Navigation Safety Rules** (but in summary, only under 'Green light' conditions and in daylight).

Required elements

The tasks can be signed off in any order, but must all be completed to a satisfactory standard in

one session.

1. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the Circulation Pattern above the lock (see the circulation patterns on the website), specifically:
 - a. where to turn at club and Temple ends and adaptations when river conditions change; and
 - b. direction of turning (eg away from the weir) and shape of turning pattern.
2. Demonstrate a clear understanding of position on the river, specifically:
 - a. Course to be taken paddling upstream and downstream with reference to Four Lane visualisation;
 - b. Location of the main stern reference points on the Marlow to Temple stretch;
 - c. Location of existing hazards on the Marlow to Temple stretch;
 - d. Knowledge of 500m training sections where crews and scullers are likely to be doing pieces.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the safety features of the boat, including buoyancy compartments (and the importance of keeping an intact seal), heel restraints, foot-strap pull and bow-ball. Appreciate importance of wearing high-vis outer layer appropriate to light conditions and when it is compulsory under the **River Access and Navigation Safety Rules**.
4. Demonstrate a working knowledge of the principal parts of the boat, blades and sculls: e.g. riggers, gates, stretchers, shoes, front stops, back stops, slides, runners, seats, wheels, button, sleeve.
5. Demonstrate ability to take a sculling boat, with an assistant, from the boat rack in the correct manner and place safely in the water. At the end of the session, show how to clean and sanitise the boat and blades before returning them to the designated racks.
6. Demonstrate ability to embark and disembark competently and safely, including positioning blades correctly on the hard standing.
7. Explain in detail the safety procedures to avoid capsizing and what to do in the event of a capsize.
8. Be able to scull a total distance of 3600m, ie one full loop of the Marlow Reach, observing the circulation pattern at all times, and demonstrating timely safety calls: eg “Ahead Quad!”.
9. Demonstrate the ‘safe position’ (legs flat, hands away, handles together).
10. Demonstrate 180 degree turn.
11. Back down 10 strokes.
12. Execute emergency stop whilst paddling light upon a shout from the assessor.

Assessor's Checklist and Certificate

Bronze Sculling Award

	ELEMENT	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
1	Circulation Pattern and Turning (Marlow Reach)		
2	Position on River, Steering Reference Points and Hazards		
3	Boat Safety Features		
4	Boat Equipment		
5	Racking and Boat Handling		
6	Embark and Disembark		
7	Understand Capsize Drill procedure		
8	3600m paddling, observing circulation pattern		
9	Safe position		
10	180 degree turn		
11	Backing down		
12	Emergency stop		

NAME OF CANDIDATE	SIGNATURE
NAME OF ASSESSOR	SIGNATURE
DATE	

Silver Award

Completion of the Silver level is worth 2 points under the **River Access and Navigation Safety Rules**, which enables the sculler to go out under a “Green light” conditions in the dark, subject to all the other rules e.g temperature.

Required Elements

The tasks can be signed off in any order, but must all be completed to a satisfactory standard in one session.

1. Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the safety requirements for sculling in the dark: providing and fitting white lights on bow and stern, position of lights for best visibility, use of high-visibility clothing on uppermost layer.
2. Understand the need for ‘conservative’ circulation pattern in the dark, e.g. stay well over to the bow-side bank and do not venture into the ‘amber lane’ to give a wider safety lane between passing crews.
3. Demonstrate ability to embark, adjust correctly, and pull away from the landing stage unaided.
4. Demonstrate good balance by:
 - a. executing 10 consecutive strokes without sculls touching the water;
 - b. executing 5 consecutive strokes square blades;
 - c. after 3 hard strokes, sitting in the hands away position for 10 seconds.
5. Back the boat down in a straight line and then stop the boat.
6. Execute an emergency stop with a turn to bow side.
7. Execute an emergency stop with a turn to stroke side.
8. Execute a 360 degree turn in both clockwise and anti-clockwise directions.
9. Demonstrate ability to approach the landing stage, land and disembark unaided.
10. After cleaning and re-racking the boat, ensure that all equipment is put away and secure the boathouse.
11. Demonstrate knowledge about how to address unfamiliar water (e.g. below the lock, or racing at other clubs).

Assessor's Checklist and Certificate

	ELEMENT	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
1	Night Sculling and Rowing Safety		
2	Circulation Pattern		
3	Embark unaided		
4	Balance drills and square blades		
5	Backing Down and Stopping		
6	Emergency Stop with turn to Bowside		
7	Emergency Stop with turn to Strokeside		
8	360 degree turn clockwise and anti-clockwise		
9	Land and disembark unaided		
10	Boathouse protocol		

NAME OF CANDIDATE	SIGNATURE
NAME OF ASSESSOR	SIGNATURE
DATE	

Gold Award

The Gold level may be carried out in a fine single sculling boat only. The Gold Award generates experience and exposes the sculler to longer distance work and higher mileage, and therefore to changeable river conditions. Completion of the Gold level is worth 3 points under the **River Access and Navigation Safety Rules**. In larger boats it may also enable Red/Amber rowing (but 1x cannot go out in Red/Amber).

N.B. Gold level scullers may only go below the Marlow lock once they have demonstrated knowledge of lock use and the Cookham Reach circulation pattern and safety hazards. This is commonly done as part of the Gold assessment but does not have to be. There is no separate "Below the Lock" endorsement recorded by the club - the Gold award is a single award and members with Gold status should exercise caution in addressing any unfamiliar water.

Required elements

The tasks can be signed off in any order, but should be completed over a period of 3 months.

1. Over a period of 3 months, the sculler must steer a total distance of 150km in a safe and competent manner, observing all the safety and technical skills learnt in the previous two levels. One loop above Marlow lock counts as 3.6km. Kilometres attained in reaching Bronze and Silver levels do not count towards the Gold level award.
2. Understand and demonstrate the 'ferry glide' technique. This allows the boat to cross the river in fast stream conditions whilst maintaining position in the stream relative to a fixed point on the bank.
3. Be conversant with the club safety documents for fast stream and temperature levels and know where to find this information and updates to conditions online.
4. Be conversant with the club safety documents for passing by the weir and through the lock, in particular the meaning of the Environment Agency 'Red' and 'Yellow' boards and how they tie in with the club's safety light system.
5. Navigate through Marlow lock demonstrating how to hold the boat steady whilst negotiating the lock gates and emptying/filling of the lock.
6. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the Circulation Pattern below the lock on the Cookham Reach, specifically:
 - a. where to turn at Gibraltar Islands and Cookham Road Bridge ends;
 - b. direction of turning and shape of turning pattern (e.g. wide loop);
 - c. location of existing hazards (e.g. Bourne End Marina) on the Marlow to Cookham stretch.

Gold Award Mileage Log

Evidence of Milage / Km achieved - i.e. Date, Km, Total to date Witnessed / on Strava

Gold Sculling Award

	ELEMENT	OUTCOME	COMMENTS
1	150km Experience		
2	Ferry Glide Understanding and Demonstration		
3	River Conditions Risk Assessment		
4	Lock Risk Assessment		
5	Lock Navigation		
6	Circulation Pattern and Turning (Cookham Reach)		

NAME OF CANDIDATE	SIGNATURE
NAME OF ASSESSOR	SIGNATURE
DATE	