

Assistant Instructor training

The Assistant Instructor (AI) award can be one of the most useful qualifications for training centres and, particularly, for clubs. Many club members want to help with the cadet training or 'learn to sail' programmes but find it difficult to spare the time to undertake full instructor training. This is just the situation where the AI can be the solution for experienced club sailors, helping the club increase the number of volunteers who can be included in their teaching ratios.

The basic principles of AI training are laid out in the Coaching Handbook (G14). In summary:

- The AI is a site-specific award valid only at the RTC where it was awarded.
- The course is run by a Senior Instructor and is intended to be completed in a weekend or similar amount of time.
- The certificate is awarded by the principal of the RTC and is valid for five years.
- The AI is qualified to assist on courses from the Youth Sailing Scheme, or the National Sailing Scheme Levels 1 and 2.

The pre-entry requirements in G14 suggest no minimum age but a personal sailing ability of at least one of the advanced National Sailing Scheme modules is required. However, this is not the only measure of pre-entry competence that could be used.

Take the example of a club member who has proven sailing ability in club races and in various wind conditions. They are well known to the SI and regularly help out with safety boat duty etc. Sound familiar? This could

describe any number of club sailors who could contribute to the club's training programme as a volunteer or AI. In this case the SI has several choices:

- The individual's sailing competence may well be far in excess of an advanced level course, so this could well be dispensed with as a pre-requisite.
- They could encourage potential AIs to take part in a standard weekend AI course.
- Alternatively they could run a series of briefings and

training sessions, over time introducing the basics of instructional technique, the RYA method and induction into the safe operating procedures of the club.

This flexible approach recognises the prior competence that an individual brings to the table, rather than slavishly following a bog-standard AI course programme.

So come on, how are you going to encourage more volunteers into helping with the club's training programme? One answer is to support, reward and recognise them using the Assistant Instructor Award.

Finally, the previous revision of the RTC guidance notes clarified the point that AIs can be included in the centre's teaching ratios. Hopefully, this more flexible approach will result in more AIs becoming qualified and more training taking place – the upshot of which is more people being introduced and continuing in the sport as a result of the greater opportunities.

