

Western Norway University of Applied Sciences - February 2022, 2nd version

A guide for water safety instruction in, by and on the water, and school swimming instruction

1 Introduction

The Norwegian National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion (LK20) was introduced in the autumn of 2020. Water safety, swimming, self-rescue and lifesaving skills outdoors are an essential part of the physical education subject in schools. These are described in the competence goals for Years 2, 4, 7 and 10.

The guide describes the requirements stated in the regulations and provide recommendations for the schools' professional learning community, to help them ensure safe and appropriate instruction for water safety, swimming, self-rescue and lifesaving. The professional learning community includes everyone who has responsibilities at various levels for both instruction and swimming at the school. This applies to teachers, instructors, assistants, school managers, school owners, and other occupational groups at schools and apprenticeship companies^{1,2} Swimming is defined as all physical activities and all events arranged by the school and the before-and-after school programme (SFO) that takes place in, near, and on water, and that does not involve teaching in a subject.

The guide replaces the 1/2008 circular from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Udir). They have been prepared by the National Centre for Food, Health and Physical Activity at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), in collaboration with the Norwegian Life Saving Society (NLS) and Udir. This guide has been revised in accordance with the new Local Government Act and amendments to the scope of responsibility in Section 13-10 of the Education Act of 1 January 2021. It replaces the previous version from June 2020.

2 Safe, responsible and appropriate instruction

Pupils' safety during instruction in, near and on the water, in addition to swimming instruction in compulsory schools must comply with requirements for responsibility and appropriateness stated in [Section 12-1 letters a and b in the regulations of the Education Act](#). Requirements for responsible and appropriate instruction apply regardless of whether the activity involves instruction in water safety, self-rescue, swimming or lifesaving in physical education subjects, instruction in, near and on the water in other subjects, or swimming arranged by the school. Teachers, in their teaching practice and in their planning, facilitation and implementation must ensure that the instruction is adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of each individual pupil ([Education Act Section 1-3](#)). The school as a

¹ [Om overordnet del](#)

² [Profesjonsfelleskap og skoleutvikling](#)

professional learning community must assess safety based on the content of the instruction, the choice of activities and local risks ([Internal control regulations, Section 5](#)).

The minimum requirement is one adult with responsibility for 15 pupils. Beyond this, supervision must be increased by one adult for each commenced group of 15 pupils. Supervision must be further increased if this is required for safety reasons (Section 121, letter b).

This provision also applies to the before-and-after school programme (SFO) (Section 12-1, letter d).

For upper secondary schools, there is only a general requirement for safety, stated in Section 12-1, letter a.

3 Safety as part of the school HSE and internal control

The school must make continuous and systematic efforts to ensure a safe and good school environment that promotes health, well-being and learning ([Education Act, Section 9 a-2 and 9 a-3](#)). It is the municipality as the school owner that is responsible for ensuring that the requirements stated in the Education Act and its regulations are met ([Education Act, Section 13-10](#)). The school owner must ensure that the schools regularly assess whether the organisation, facilitation and implementation of instruction contributes to achieving the goals of the curriculum. Schools must involve the pupils in this assessment ([Education Act, Section 13-3e](#)).

The chief municipal executive has the formal responsibility of ensuring that schools comply with the regulations. The requirement for internal control is a common provision that applies to the various municipal and county council sectors. This is stated in the [Local Government Act, Section 25-1](#). The Act replaces previous provisions of the Education Act, Section 13-10 relating to a responsible system. It is intended to help prevent and deter violations of the regulations and ensure that such violations are identified and rectified.³

Health, safety and environment

Health, safety and environment legislation sets requirements for the school's internal control. This involves the school owner's control system and the school's own control system for ensuring responsible and appropriate instruction. The purpose of the regulations relating to systematic health, safety and environment activities (HSE) in enterprises (internal control regulations) is to ensure that the enterprise achieves the objectives of health, safety and environment legislation.

The [regulations relating to environmentally friendly health protection in kindergartens and schools, etc.](#) (pursuant to the Norwegian Public Health Act) state that internal control must also include the safety of the children/pupils. In [Section 14 of the regulations](#), we find the following requirements:

- The enterprise shall be planned and operated in such a way that prevents injuries and accidents.

³ [Krav om internkontroll](#)

- The enterprise shall have routines and equipment in place for managing accidents and dangerous situations.
- Everyone must be made aware of the routines and safety equipment, including children and pupils.

The school must have a sufficient amount of first aid equipment of a satisfactory standard. The school owner is responsible for ensuring that all school employees are aware of where the equipment is stored and how to administer first aid ([regulations relating to environmentally friendly health protection in kindergartens and schools, etc., Section 15](#)).

Internal control

[The Internal control regulations, Section 5](#) describe the content of internal control. According to Sections 6 and 8, the professional learning community at the school must review written documentation

- assess local risks and prepare plans with specific measures for preventing accidents, and prepare an emergency plan for managing accidents
- ensure that these plans are always followed and made known to persons who are supervising activities
- ensure that the supervision and safety is adequate for the group of pupils as a whole, and in accordance with requirements regarding responsible and appropriate instruction (cf. regulations pursuant to the Education Act, Section 12-1)
- ensure that persons who are supervising the activity have the necessary life-saving competency based on where the instruction and swimming is taking place, pupil diversity, and the risks involved in the instruction/activities
- determine the necessary frequency of refresher courses and the control of local life-saving competence
- develop a system for reporting any deviations
- systematically monitor and review internal control to ensure that school instruction and activities are implemented in a safe manner

Internal control must be documented in a form and scope that is necessary based on the school and type of instruction, activities, risks and size. Documentation that follows from requirements that are stated in, or that are consistent with health, safety and environment legislation, such as instructions, permits, certificates, proof of competency, etc., shall be an integral part of this.

The school's internal control and accompanying documentation is not only important for the pupils' safety and security, but also for supervisors, so that they feel secure in knowing that their actions are in compliance with applicable regulations.

[Internal control regulations, Section 6](#) sets requirements for coordination. When two or more enterprises perform work at the same work site, or when an enterprise engages a contractor or service provider, they must, when necessary, agree in writing which of them is to be responsible for coordinating the internal control of their joint activities or areas.

When the municipality, as the school owner, engages contractors or service providers to perform an assignment (voluntary organisations or other external actors) in the municipality's own area or facility, the providers' own internal control systems shall be made the basis for the work encompassed by the assignment.

The school owner is responsible for ensuring that the contractor or service provider has a functioning internal control system. The school is responsible for obtaining this information.

The minimum requirements for how internal control should be conducted are stipulated in the Local Government Act, Section 25-1. The goal of internal control is to ensure that the pupils are given instruction in accordance with the regulations, and that their rights are protected.

4 Adapted instruction and safety as part of the teacher's teaching work

Education and instruction must be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of each individual pupil (Education Act, Section 1-3). In their work, teachers and other supervising persons must therefore ensure that no individual pupil is ever put in a situation that would require them to exceed their own level of proficiency and ability for self-rescue. Self-rescue skills are skills needed for safety in, near and on the water, and the ability to manage on one's own in a variable water environment. Competence goals that involve water safety, swimming, self-rescue and lifesaving gradually progress from Year 2 to Year 10. Competence goals are related to the core elements "Movement and physical learning" and "Outdoor and nature-based activities". These competence goals must be viewed in relation to one another, both within and between the core elements and with instruction across subjects.⁴

*Competence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills in order to master challenges and solve tasks in known and unknown contexts and situations. Competence also involves the understanding of and the ability for reflection and critical thinking.*⁵

⁴ [Læreplan i kroppøving \(KR001-05\)](#)

⁵ [Kompetanse i fagene](#)

Education and instruction shall facilitate progression in the development of competence based on the abilities and aptitudes of each individual pupil. It must prepare and enable pupils to assess risks and to master new and unknown situations they encounter during instruction and outside the school.

The progression of the instruction will challenge each pupil's level of understanding, reflection and critical thinking related to the mastery of skills, limitations and challenges in a varied water environment in, near and on the water, and to ensure their own safety. Pupils develop competence by performing assignments and participating in varied activities of increasing complexity, which can also stimulate each individual pupil's motivation, interest in learning and belief in their own proficiency.⁵

5 Competence requirements for supervision during instruction and swimming

The overarching part of the Norwegian national curriculum describes the values and principles for learning that will characterise pedagogical practice throughout basic education.

Only teachers (or others who are employed in teaching positions) may have the pedagogical responsibility for instruction in the school and ensure that the instruction is in accordance with the national curriculum. The teacher shall have relevant professional and pedagogical competence ([regulations for the Norwegian Education Act, Section 14-1](#) to [Section 14-3](#), cf. [Education Act, Section 10-1](#), [Section 10-2](#), [Section 10-6](#) and [Section 10-6a](#)).

Assistants, instructors or other external providers can assist the teacher if this is done in a manner and scope which ensures that the pupils receive the appropriate benefits from the instruction ([Education Act, Section 10-11](#)).

The school owner is responsible for ensuring that teachers and other school employees have the correct and necessary competence, and that they have the opportunity to develop professionally and pedagogically ([Education Act, Section 10-8](#)).

Supervising persons must be skilled at swimming, diving and life-saving techniques (Section 12-1, letter b of the regulations pursuant to the Education Act). The competence of supervising persons in this area must be adapted to the type of school and instruction, activities, risks and size. Specific requirements should be emphasised during the internal control.

Engaging the local community and society can provide a positive contribution to the development of the school and pupils. Collaboration between teachers and instructors, volunteer organisations, or

⁵ [Undervisning og tilpasset oppl ring](#)

other actors can be a positive contribution to the school's and pupils' instruction in water safety, swimming, self-rescue and lifesaving.⁶

For swimming as part of a physical activity ([regulations pursuant to the Education Act, Section 1-1 a](#)) the academic and pedagogical competence requirements stated in Chapter 10 of the Education Act and Chapter 14 of the regulations pursuant to the Education Act do not apply. Nor do they apply to employees of the before-and-after school programme (SFO).

6 Local lifesaving competence

The competency of supervising persons must be adapted to pupil diversity, the type of instruction, risks and activities, and it must be documented by internal control. This means that the supervisors' competencies in the areas of swimming, diving and lifesaving in an instructional situation may be complex in terms of both pedagogical competence and skills. Internal control must describe what is considered to be responsible and appropriate competence, based on a local risk assessment.

The composition of the supervisor's competence must be adapted to the content of the instruction, activities and pupil diversity. Supervising persons must have adequate self-rescue skills and lifesaving competence based on the relevant supervision task. In order to know what type of tasks each supervising person is qualified for, and whether their qualifications are sufficient based on the requirements evident from the risk assessment, the supervising persons must undergo a lifesaving test. This is an assessment and documentation of each person's swimming, diving and lifesaving skills.

A review of the assessment and documentation based on the requirements evident from the risk assessment means that no one is given supervision tasks that exceed their own competence, which in turn means that both teachers and supervising persons can feel more secure. When the supervising person has the necessary competence, this ensures responsible and appropriate instruction, which in turn ensures the safety of the pupils.

Section 5 of the internal control regulations stipulates a systematic review of internal control to make sure that it functions as expected.

A refresher course in local lifesaving skills would entail a review of the routines pursuant to Section 14 of the regulations relating to environmentally friendly health protection in kindergartens and schools,

⁶ [Et inkluderende læringsmiljø](#)

etc. Since swimming, diving and lifesaving skills must be maintained, they must also be refreshed regularly and in advance of any instruction.