



Risk Management Policy

Karate, like all physical activities, involves an element of risk for its practitioners. The aim of the JKA-SI Risk Management Policy is to set down guidelines for its affiliate clubs so that the risks inherent in the practising of the martial art are minimised to the greatest possible extent.

The primary areas of risk arising from the practice of karate have been identified as:

1. Injury resulting from excessive contact between members, including instructors.
2. Injury resulting from a medical condition
3. Sprains, ligament damage or Repetitive Stress Injury
4. Injury resulting from foreign bodies or liquids on the floor
5. Injury as a result of fire in the building
6. Bullying, including excessive or inappropriate aggression
7. Spread of infection as a result of blood spillage
8. Risk to minors

Through good practices in teaching of karate these risks can be minimised or eliminated, and to that end the JKA-SI advises all affiliate clubs to put measures in place to deal with these risks. Control measures should include, but are not limited to, the precautionary measures identified below.

1. Injury resulting from excessive contact between members, including instructors

It is in the nature of karate that contact between practitioners is essential to their development. Practical steps to reduce the risk of injury must be taken by instructors at all times by ensuring that:

- Students must not be permitted to wear jewellery including watches, earrings, rings etc. during training. Students are to be advised that they must take suitable precautions to protect themselves against possible injury arising from contact with body piercings etc.
- Care is taken to match the risk of injury associated with each exercise to the level of experience of the students, and the level of supervision possible.
- Students are given clear instructions in relation to target areas for attack in each exercise.

- Where beginners are paired off for partner work involving contact, the instructor should initially match students in accordance with size. This requirement should not be necessary after a year of training, though matching children to adult partners is to be avoided except where the adult is at a grade of 3rd kyu or higher and has demonstrated a high degree of control.
- The level of speed associated with exercises is to be matched to the experience of the students. In general, exercises start slowly and build up to an appropriate level of speed.
- Exercises involving throws to the floor should only be performed where the flooring is suitably sprung or matted.
- During free-fighting (jiyu kumite), appropriate mouth guards and mitts are to be worn.
- The level of physical contact must be monitored by the instructor during training in accordance with the club's Physical Contact Policy. JKA-SI instructors will apply the JKA-SI Physical Contact Policy as an upper limit on the level of allowed contact.

2. Injury resulting from a medical condition

While the practice of karate is known to have many health benefits, there is always a risk that during training an existing medical condition could be exacerbated. The greatest risk potential is that of cardiac arrest during training, but other forms of illness can arise also.

JKA-SI recommends that all training is conducted in an environment where First Aid facilities are available. This may be provided by the facilities staffs where training is carried out in a Sports Centre or by a club member or instructors who holds a current certificate of First Aid competence and a suitable first aid kit.

JKA-SI encourages all clubs to have access to a defibrillator and suitably trained users.

Practical measures to be taken by clubs to minimise the risk of such a medical emergency include:

- Having an awareness of any serious medical conditions of students
- Reminding students to be aware of their own conditions, and avoiding certain exercises which may cause complications for them. JKA-SI recommends that such messages be given on a regular basis, and the date & time of such briefings be recorded along with a record of those present.
- Instructors should ensure that exercises are matched to the general physical condition of students. Since instructors are not qualified physicians this guideline is only intended to avoid requiring inexperienced students to undertake prolonged vigorous exercise more appropriate to athletes at the peak of their fitness.
- Instructors should monitor the visible signs of wellness of students and ensure that exercises are pitched at an appropriate level, with adequate breaks for recovery. Students should be encouraged to take small amounts of water during classes to avoid dehydration.

- Clubs should hold a register of contact telephone numbers for all their students, including emergency family contact numbers and have this available in proximity to the club training area.

3. Sprains, ligament damage or Repetitive Stress Injury

The nature of karate training requires that exercises be repeated to develop competence. However it is recognised that the repetition of exercises can lead to stress injuries among practitioners. Through high standards of instruction the risk of such exercises can be minimised, and it is JKA-SI policy to ensure that all instructors are aware of the underlying causes of such injury to students, and the steps to be taken to avoid such injury.

JKA-SI promotes the highest quality of competence among its instructors and to this end the following practical measures are advised for instructors teaching karate:

- All classes should commence with a thorough warm-up to gently stretch the muscles and ligaments prior to undertaking any fast movements, or by warming-up through the gentle performance of kihon exercises. When training with experienced students, it is equally reasonable to require that they perform their own warm-up exercises.
- Repeat warm-ups as necessary during a class if there has been a period of relative inactivity. Particular care should be taken of the hips, ankles, and neck.
- For beginners and low kyu grades exercises should start off slowly and gently, building up to speed once the basic mechanics of the exercise are understood by the students and demonstrated accordingly.
- Repetitive exercises should be carried out both slowly and at speed, especially where the exercises are known to be unfamiliar to students.
- Repeated, hard and fast air-kicking should be limited in terms of the number of repetitions. Prolonged repetitive air-kicking with speed and power can cause damage to the knee and hips joints and it is preferable to limit the number of repetitions by introducing variety into the techniques. As a general guideline, limiting the fast repetitions of a technique to no more than 10 consecutive iterations per leg is advised.
- Experience suggests that repetitive hard air-punching is less likely to cause injury, but JKA-SI advises that the same principle should apply as for air-kicking, on the basis of prudent risk-avoidance.
- The use of kick bags, punch bags or pads is strongly advised for students. As with other exercises these exercises should be introduced gently to ensure that students are familiar with the technique, especially the correct body posture to avoid injury to wrists, fingers, toes, etc. Where students hold pads for other students to strike, the instructor is advised to match students in terms of weight and height as best as possible to minimise the risk of injuries.
- Students holding pads or bags for other students to strike should be shown the correct technique for doing so, with particular care to the measures for avoiding whiplash or shock injury.
- Classes should finish with a short period of cool-down exercises to promote recovery of muscles and joints after exercise.

4. Injury resulting from foreign bodies or liquids on the floor

In most cases JKA-SI instructors are not the owners of the premises in which training is carried out. The primary responsibility for the condition of the floor rests with the club and/or property owner or manager. However in choosing to use a property for karate classes, an instructor must be mindful of the possibility of injury being caused as a result of foreign bodies on the floor (e.g. such as may occur where previous users of the hall have been wearing outdoor footwear), or as a result of wet areas of the floor which may lead to slipping by students which could result in injury.

Prior to each class the club instructor should visually inspect the floor for evidence of materials or liquids which have the potential to cause injury to students.

5. Injury as a result of fire or emergency in the building

In most cases JKA-SI instructors are not the owners of the premises in which training is carried out. The primary responsibility for the fire detection, alarm, and fire-fighting equipment rests with the club and/or owner of the building. However in choosing to conduct classes in a building the instructor should satisfy himself that some fire precautions have been taken, including the fitting of fire detection and alarm equipment, and that emergency escapes are provided from the building. Students should periodically be advised of the fire & emergency evacuation procedures.

6. Bullying, including excessive or inappropriate aggression

Training in karate requires discipline on the part of all practitioners and instructors so that students may learn the art in a safe environment. The practice of training requires students to allow themselves be physically attacked by their peers in a manner that is both controlled and realistic, and this is a fundamental aspect of martial art training without which a student's development is hindered. Within such an environment there can be no place for any form of bullying between students, or between student and instructor.

The most important aspect of a karate instructor's role is to ensure that his/her students can learn the art safely. To this end JKA-SI requires each affiliate club to have an anti-bullying policy, which is applicable to the relationship between students, as well as to the relationship between student and instructor. Such policies must set out how complaints of bullying are to be dealt with. A sample complaint form is attached as appendix A. In the case of complaints against an JKA-SI instructor provided from the club this form should be used and sent to info@jkashotokanireland.ie where it will be automatically distributed to the Chairman and Treasurer of the JKA-SI and dealt with as outlined in appendix B.

There are practical measures which instructors should take to reduce the incidence of bullying or inappropriate aggression between students.

- Where new students arrive to the club, the instructor should take care to partner those students with existing senior, more experienced members for kumite drills. This allows the instructor to assess the behaviour of the new member without risking the safety of junior members of the club.
- New members to a club should be monitored closely during kihon exercises to observe whether their claimed level of experience is consistent with their abilities.
- During kumite drills the instructor should observe the level of contact between students, and quickly act to correct students who are over-exuberant in their efforts as this behaviour can lead to conflict between students.
- Instructors should rotate partners periodically during partner drills, to avoid a situation where students may become stressed about being partnered with the same person with whom they may be having some difficulty.
- Students must be periodically reminded of the importance of respect being shown before, during and after all partner drills. Students who repeatedly behave improperly towards other students should be expelled from the club, or have some other sanction applied.
- Special care must be taken when partner work is being practised between mixed genders, as the scope for inappropriate behaviour is increased. It is however preferable not to separate the students into male-male and female-female partner arrangements as this can lead to a false sense of security or a false understanding of one's ability to control techniques.

7. Spread of infection as a result of blood spillage

All clubs affiliated to JKA-SI should have a policy on blood spillage to ensure that there is no spread of infection through blood. Where they occur blood spills must be contained and cleaned quickly and thoroughly.

To minimise the risk of blood spills, instructors and club committees should remind students periodically of the need to:

- Keep fingernails and toenails cut short, without sharp edges.
- Remove jewellery before training
- Take great care when punching to the face to avoid the nose and mouth, as these are among the areas most prone to a blood injury.
- All dojos must have immediate access to first aid kits, including disinfectant for cleaning blood spills. It is recommended that rubber or latex gloves should be worn when cleaning such spills.

8. Risk to minors

There is a special onus on sports clubs where persons under 18 years of age are being trained, and this applies equally to karate clubs. All clubs affiliated to JKA-SI

must have a Child Protection Officer appointed and must have a policy for the protection of minors.

This policy must address issues of

- Coach Ratios
- Changing room awareness
- Dealing with injuries and Illness
- Collection of children by Parents/carers
- Discipline issues
- Physical contact issues
- Sexual Activity issues

Appendix A: Incident Report / Complaint Form

Incident Report / Complaint

This form is to be used to record an injury to a student for which First Aid was required, or to record a complaint against the conduct of a member

Club: _____ Incident Location: _____

Incident Date: _____ Incident Time: _____

Details of person injured / person making complaint:

Name: _____ E-mail or phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Nature of injury:

Details of Incident / complaint:

Does Injury require Hospital/Physician? Yes: _____ No: _____

Hospital Name: _____

Address: _____

Hospital Phone Numbers: _____

Injured person/Party Signature/Date: _____

Additional Notes including details of witnesses:

Prepared By: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

This report should be given to the instructor or a member of the club's committee.

Appendix B: JKA-SI Complaints Handling procedure

The Incident Report/Complaint form in Appendix A should be used by clubs to make a complaint to the JKA-SI and send to info@jkashotokanireland.ie where it will be automatically distributed to the Chairman and Treasurer of the JKA-SI. The JKA-SI requests that complaints should be reviewed within the affiliated clubs structure first and referred to the JKA-SI once the club committee has considered the incident.

The JKA-SI policy for dealing with such complaints against its instructors is as follows:

Step 1: The Incident Report/Complaint Form is received by Chairman and Treasurer by email from the affiliated club committee.

Step 2: The Incident Report/Complaint Form is circulated to the JKA-SI committee members for notification

Step 2: The Incident Report/Complaint Form is reviewed by the JKA-SI committee and the club committee and complainant are contacted to confirm details of the incident being reported

Step 3: The JKA-SI instructor is advised of the complaint and asked for any relevant details of the incident in writing

Step 4: The JKA-SI committee reviews the complaint and any further detail provided by the Instructor and determines a course of action based on a Quorum of the committee being present.

If the complaint is against a member of the JKA-SI committee they will be excluded from the committee's deliberations and decision making process.

Step 5: The JKA-SI will write to the club and complainant advising of its decision in relation to the complaint and advising of any actions being taken.