

ICSM Sub-Aqua Merger Appeal

A note by the Sub Aqua Club

In light of the recent decision to merge ICSM Sub-Aqua with IC Underwater, we (ICSM Sub-Aqua) would like the chance to appeal against this decision. We understand that on paper there are a number of reasons that would make the merger of the two clubs look like a sensible option. However, we as a club were not given the opportunity to defend ourselves against the merger. We feel there were points that may not have been apparent when this decision was made and would now appreciate the opportunity to have these considered. Below is a list of reasons with explanations for keeping the clubs separate.

Activities

Sub-Aqua and Underwater do share a number of activities, however Sub-Aqua has a history of carrying out medical research projects and in the past year has been picking this up once again. This gives medical students the opportunity to reinforce some of their course material, learn interesting new information about hyperbaric medicine that may be useful to their future profession and give them first-hand experience of research. We also receive training in the medical implications of diving and in first aid from qualified Doctors. This goes far beyond the required BSAC training and is very valuable to our Medical Student members!

Timetabling

Sub-Aqua work around the Medical School timetable which is vastly different from the standard college dates. This means that we ensure training both in the pool and in the open water does not clash with the examination periods. We also ensure that our training times allow Students to make it back to Central London from hospital placements, which can be as far away as Staines, and arrange catch up weekends for those unable to make all training sessions due to hospital placements.

We provide BSAC training for members prior to their Electives, which allows them to experience diving wherever in the world they decide to go. As our Final Year Students are split into three groups for Electives we often tailor training to their needs so they can be fully qualified before they go.

Cost

Diving is an expensive sport and with the added debt of the long course for a Medical Student, Sub-Aqua seeks to ensure that diving can be carried out for as little as possible so that it is open to every Medical Student. This involves a lower membership price than Underwater; no kit hire charges, unlike Underwater and providing cheap accommodation alternatives, such as camping, when we go on dive trips.

It has been suggested that the use of Underwater air compressor would make it cheaper for members; this would save £2-£3 per open water trip per Student, whilst they charge for kit hire, which would easily amount to more than this. We have also recently received funding from the St Mary's association to provide free kit to our members and are planning on applying for more funding to ensure we can keep this commitment.

Grant

It may have appeared that Sub-Aqua had not spent its' grant. This is not true, the majority of Sub-Aquas' grant from the Union goes on pool hire and then Summer training trips, due to faults in the system and the decision being made before the Summer it appeared that we had not and would not spend our grant. I believe we have now spent the vast majority of our grant and the remaining money will be spent in the next few days.

Membership

At the time of the meeting we had 19 out of the required 20 members, again because Sub-Aqua has a lot of Members that join us in the summer this is not an entirely accurate representation of the number of the members of our club, which is now at 20 members.

We also now have members who were Fresher's last year on the Committee for the first time in recent years. We feel that this is a good sign and hope to build on this next year and gain more members.

Training Clashes

Sub-Aqua hold training on Monday nights, unlike Underwater who train on Wednesdays. Sports teams and clubs are a big part for the medical school and so for the members of Sub-Aqua. Holding the training on a Monday allows Sub-Aqua members to participate in both Sub-Aqua and other clubs, which they would not be able to do so if training took part on Wednesdays. This would have a negative impact on participation and membership numbers.

Sub-Aqua is also fortunate to have a team of dedicated doctors and alumni who provide training and additional courses to members. This would not be possible if the merger were to occur, due to work rotas and other responsibilities.

Union Cost

The amount of funding that Sub-Aqua receives from the union is easily less than 10% of that which Underwater receives. I realise that this represents additional members and memberships costs, but it is not in a comparable increase, next year Underwater will be receiving about £200 per Student member whereas Sub-Aqua would receive about £40 per member. So not merging the two clubs actually represents the cheaper option for the Union.

Tour Report

We are grateful to the Union for providing additional funds for our Tour this year and a Tour Report was submitted less than two weeks following the Tour taking place. It was suggested, following the reasons for merger, that our Tour Report was however not submitted. This was not the case, nor was it three weeks late as was then suggested once the initial accusation was challenged.

The above represent a number of points that have been brought up against the merger. We are very grateful to you for taking the time to read and consider these points.