

Limited Expert Review of Selected Rubelis Beyond Diver Materials

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I was asked to undertake a limited expert review of *Rubelis Beyond Diver*, a post-certification development programme for certified recreational divers. The material provided comprised the programme overview, learning outcomes and assessment approach, together with three representative chapters: *Threshold*, *Fear* and *Guest*. This was therefore a review of selected material rather than a full academic peer review of the complete 12-module programme.

The programme is clearly differentiated from conventional diver training and is not presented as a substitute for practical instruction or certification. Its purpose is more reflective: to encourage divers to think about how they behave underwater, how they respond to stress and uncertainty, how they interact with buddies and the marine environment, and how their own motivation and judgement affect the way they dive. I think this is a reasonable and potentially useful premise. Many of these aspects of diver development are normally acquired informally through experience, mentoring, good instructors and interaction with more experienced divers, and not all recreational divers have regular access to that kind of environment.

The strongest parts of the material are therefore the reflective elements. Questions such as why someone dives, whether fear or group pressure has affected a decision, or what behaviour they might change on a future dive are useful prompts and fit well with the stated purpose of the programme. The *Guest* chapter similarly succeeds where it encourages divers to think beyond simple rules such as 'do not touch coral' and instead consider the effect of their presence, positioning, fin control, photography and proximity to marine life.

Where I think the programme needs more care is in the way scientific and technical material is used to support these broader messages. In several places, useful practical advice is accompanied by physiological, psychological or ecological explanations that are more definitive than they need to be. The *Fear* chapter is a good example. The advice to stop where safe, stabilise, control breathing and assess what is actually happening is sensible. However, this is then explained through relatively simple amygdala/cortex and vagal-response models which imply a more direct and certain neurological mechanism than is necessary to make the practical point.

There are also places where technical diving examples require greater qualification. The free-flow regulator scenario, for example, describes valve shutdown, switching regulators and making a controlled ascent as though this were a generally applicable procedure, whereas the appropriate response depends on equipment configuration, training and environment. This is particularly important because the programme is aimed at recreational divers with potentially very different levels of experience and training. Similar caution would improve some of the environmental material, where the broad conservation messages are generally sound but a number of quantitative or ecological claims are presented categorically where the underlying evidence is likely to be more context-dependent.

The writing style occasionally reinforces this problem. The chapters make frequent use of short declarative statements, rhetorical questions and repeated contrasts of the form 'not this, but that'. This can be engaging and works well for reflective material, but repeated use can also make nuanced issues appear unnecessarily binary. For example, the *Fear* chapter repeatedly contrasts overcoming fear with listening to it, while *Guest* contrasts rules with understanding and taking with seeing or visiting. I would use this style more selectively, particularly where scientific or safety-related issues are being discussed, as it can unintentionally give simplified interpretations an authority they do not necessarily warrant.

One useful way of addressing these issues would be to distinguish more consistently between personal experience, reflective interpretation and evidence-based scientific content. Rubelis already appears to use this approach elsewhere through separate 'Science Note' and 'Real Experience' sections, and applying the same discipline throughout *Beyond Diver* would strengthen the material.

considerably. Personal stories and reflections are useful in their own right and do not always need additional scientific explanation.

The assessment approach would also benefit from further development. Although the stated intention is to test judgement, interpretation and perspective, the representative questions tend mainly to test whether the participant can identify the interpretation presented by Rubelis. More scenario-based questions, with several plausible responses requiring the participant to weigh competing considerations, would better reflect the stated learning outcomes.

In summary, I think *Rubelis Beyond Diver* has a coherent concept and may be useful for recreational divers who are interested in reflection, self-awareness and the non-technical aspects of diving. Its main strengths lie in the questions it asks and the behaviours it encourages divers to examine. I would, however, recommend a more systematic review of scientific and technical claims, clearer separation of evidence from personal interpretation, more restrained use of rhetorical simplification where complex issues are concerned, and further development of the assessment if the programme is to be presented as evidence-informed continuing education.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C Poonian', with a stylized, cursive script.

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