

Summits on the Air

General Rules



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Authorised by SOTA Management Team **01-Jun-2022**
SOTA: an original concept by G3WGV and developed with G3CWI

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1 Change control

| Date | Version | Details |
|-----------|---------|--|
| 02-Mar-02 | 1.0 | First formal issue of this document |
| 06-Mar-02 | 1.1 | Addition of clause in rule 3.4 excluding the use of IOTA continent abbreviations as SOTA region descriptions |
| 01-Apr-02 | 1.2 | SOTA rules separated from the Association Reference Manuals and renamed “General Rules”. Clarification of wording related to minimum number of qualifying QSO counts per Expedition. Clarification of bands permitted on expeditions. Correction of minor grammatical errors. |
| 23-Apr-02 | 1.3 | Clarification on scoring principles for Activators, Chasers and SWLs added. |
| 04-Feb-03 | 1.4 | Clarification of certificate issue policy in Rule 3.13. Inclusion of an SWL certificate. |
| 01-Mar-03 | 1.5 | Rule 3.7.1 changed to permit use of other callsigns by Activator. New clause 6 to Rule 3.8 explicitly permits Summit to Summit QSOs to be counted towards Activator’s Chaser score. Rule 3.13.1: Clarification on certificate issuing policy. |
| 24-Jun-03 | 1.6 | Rule 3.17 added – trademarks and copyright. |
| 19-Aug-03 | 1.7 | Clarification of licensing requirements for Activators, Chasers and SWLs. |
| 01-Jan-04 | 1.8 | Rule 3.7.1 clarifies location requirements for the Activator’s operation position. Rule 3.7.4 contains additional safety information. Rule 3.8 implements one claim in 24 hours revision. Rule 3.11.2 updated to include more information on rationale. |
| 02-Apr-05 | 1.9 | Rule 3.12 substantially rewritten to bring the documentation requirements into line with established practice and to clarify the documentation obligations of the Association. Clarification of Vertical Separation rule. |
| 19-Oct-05 | 1.10 | New clause 12 added to Rule 3.7.1 to clarify activation rules from Summits that are on the borders of two or more Associations. Rule 3.13.1 substantially rewritten to include the Unique Summits award and to clarify certificate issue beyond 1000 points. |

| Date | Version | Details |
|-----------|---------|--|
| 11-Feb-07 | 1.11 | <p>Rules 3.2.6 and 3.15 updated to reflect implementation of the SOTAWatch system.</p> <p>Rule 3.2.3 amended to avoid conflict with clause 3.14 regarding responsibility for the appointment of Association Managers.</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1, clause 8 amended to clarify the number of QSOs required for a valid activation and to claim points.</p> <p>Rule 3.12.4 updated to clarify precedence in the case of translations of the General Rules into other languages</p> <p>Rule 3.14 amended to normally require that the Association Manager is a resident national of the Association.</p> <p>Rule 3.17.1 updated to specify web site linking rules for the SOTA logo.</p> |
| 10-Jan-08 | 1.12 | <p>Change to permissible format of International Reference Numbers.</p> <p>Definition of Relative Height amended to specify minimum value of 150m.</p> <p>Rule 3.5 amended to remove discretionary use of Relative Height values of less than 150m</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1, clause 9 amended to clarify the validity of QSOs made with participants on the same summit but outside the Activation Zone.</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1, clause 13 amended to clarify the rules related to activations of summits shared by one or more Association.</p> <p>Rule 3.8, clause 3 amended to clarify validity of chaser points where UTC is not local time.</p> <p>Rule 3.11 amended to remove guidelines related to summit band percentages. New provision to allow less than five scoring bands where appropriate.</p> <p>Rule 3.14 updated to provide for continued participation should the Association Manager post become vacant.</p> |
| 01-Apr-08 | 1.13 | <p>Rule 3.5 amended to allow discretionary use of Relative Height values of less than 150m, down to a minimum of 100m subject to MT approval.</p> |
| 01-Mar-09 | 1.14 | <p>Rule 3.1 amended to bring it into line with Rule 3.5</p> <p>Rule 3.5 amended to clarify handling of re-surveyed and deleted summits</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 clause 3 - simplified rules for Final Ascent</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 clause 13 - simplified rules for operation from Shared Summits</p> <p>Rule 3.9 amended to bring SWL rules into line with those for licensed chasers</p> |

| Date | Version | Details |
|-----------|---------|--|
| 01-Jun-09 | 1.15 | <p>Rule 3.6.1 amended to reflect current practice regarding update submission. Option for retrospective approval of summits removed.</p> <p>Old 3.6.2 merged with new 3.6.1</p> <p>Rule 3.7.3 renamed “Code of Conduct” and significantly re-written</p> <p>Rule 3.11.2 amended to allow more than one seasonal bonus within an Association</p> <p>Rule 3.12.2 amended to require specific format for positional information and agreement on effective date for changes to the ARM</p> <p>All references to “Programme Management Team” amended to “Management Team”</p> |
| 01-Aug-10 | 1.16 | <p>Rule 3.2.6 amended to link to SOTAwatch Reflector rather than Yahoo group.</p> <p>Rule 3.6 amended to require supporting documentation for proposed summits when requested.</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 paragraph 3 amended to stress invalidity of activations in the vicinity of motor vehicles.</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 paragraph 14 added to include “the spirit of SOTA” as a factor in the validity of an activation.</p> <p>Rule 3.11.1 (Alternative scoring strategy option) deleted.</p> <p>Subsequent sub-sections re-numbered.</p> <p>Rule 3.13.2 renamed “Other SOTA Awards” and re-written to allow award rules to cross Association boundaries.</p> |
| 30-Mar-15 | 1.20 | <p>Major revision</p> <p>Section 2 - Definitions added showing web links</p> <p>Rule 3.1 SOTA purpose added and web link added. Rule 3.2.1 Scope expanded to state programme is P150m (defined by a minimum P150 prominence) added.</p> <p>Rule 3.2.2 SOTA Management Team responsibilities extended and Associate Team members added.</p> <p>Rule 3.2.3 Associations adopt SOTA rules by agreeing to join SOTA Award programme added. Role of local Association Manager and outline of SOTA submission added.</p> <p>Rule 3.2.5 Classes of participant extended and club stations added.</p> <p>Rule 3.5 Definition of P150 and P100 expanded</p> <p>Rule 3.2.6 Donations and web-link added</p> <p>Rule 3.3 Start Date not retrospective added</p> <p>Rule 3.4 expanded with examples</p> <p>Rule 3.5 Note 1 re-worded to explain minimum P150 and exceptional P100 use.</p> |
| 30-Mar-15 | 1.20 | <p>Major revision continued</p> <p>Rule 3.5 Note 4 Operation ‘within’ or ‘near’ a vehicle prohibited clarified.</p> |

| Date | Version | Details |
|-----------|---------|---|
| | | <p>Rule 3.5 Note 6 added for Definition of Summit Density for P100 qualification Also definition Activation Zone explained.</p> <p>Rule 3.6 Schedule for adding/deleting summits expanded.</p> <p>Rule 3.6.1 Updates managed by local Association Manager added.</p> <p>Rule 3.6.3 Process for updating non-conforming P150m associations added</p> <p>Rule 3.6.5 Period of transition granted for 3.6.3 added Rule 3.7</p> <p>Rules How to check access by Activators expanded. Rule 3.7.1 Note 1 to cover Club stations expanded</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 Note 3 added</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 Note 4 expanded</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 Note 8 expanded</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 Note 10 added (Use of artificial satellites or free balloon)</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 Note 15 added (Border summits)</p> <p>Rule 3.7.3 Code of Practice expanded</p> <p>Rule 3.8 Rules for Chasers – Minor additions</p> <p>Rule 3.9 Rules for SWL – Minor additions</p> <p>Rule 3.11 Rules for Scoring system – Minor additions</p> <p>Rule 3.11.2 Rule for activator season bonus explained.</p> <p>Rule 3.12.1 General Rule & Management of the SOTA Award Programme – Notes 1 – 7 added for fuller explanation</p> <p>Rule 3.12.2 Note 3 Words Longitude and Latitude interposed.</p> <p>Rule 3.13 expanded.</p> <p>Rule 3.13.1 Microwave, 6m,10m and 12m awards added</p> <p>Rule 3.13.2 Extended.</p> <p>Rule 3.14 Administration of SOTA - Management role extended.</p> <p>Rule 3.17 Trademarks and Copyright – Usage limitation explained</p> |
| 01-Jun-22 | 1.21 | <p>Rule 3.2.3 (3) Language adjustment for clarity</p> <p>Rule 3.2.6 Update URLs</p> <p>Rule 3.6.3 Rewording of paragraph for clarity</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 (1) Rewritten to be independent of chaser/activator titles.</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 (3). Update to clarify access rules.</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 (8). Clarification of language</p> <p>Rule 3.7.1 (13). Clarification of language</p> <p>Rule 3.11.2 Adjustment to match language in other sections.</p> |

| Date | Version | Details |
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| | | Rule 3.12.1 (3) Clarification of language Rule 3.12.1 (7) Clarification of language Rule 3.13.1 Update of Challenge Awards Rule 3.14 Clarification of language |

2 Definitions

A clear definition of Prominence is provided on the following links:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topographic_prominence
- <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=topographic+prominence&safe=active&biw=832&bih=854&site=webhp&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=kukPVdbvMMiz7gaYzoGYDw&sqi=2&ved=0CFwQsAQ&dpr=1>

3 General Rules

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of SOTA (the Programme) is to encourage Amateur Radio based activity from the summits of hills and mountains in countries around the world and to provide an award system for Radio Amateurs in all DXCC Entities. (see <http://www.sota.org.uk/>) The Programme is intended to encourage activity from clearly defined peaks, including major mountains. To enable participation in the Programme to be as wide ranging as possible, lesser peaks may also be included. An incremental scoring system recognises the higher peaks accordingly. The Programme is intended for portable operation (/P) and does not accept operation from a motor vehicle.

The Programme provides for participation by Activators who make QSOs from the Summits, Chasers who make contact with the Activators, and Short Wave Listeners.

In addition to Amateur Radio Awards, the SOTA Programme encourages activity in amateur radio operation, increasing knowledge and skills in the use of equipment, particularly in antennas, as well as encouraging new skills, for example, in operating CW and data modes (for those who do not already possess them).

3.2 Programme Structure

3.2.1 Scope

The Programme is a P150m Award Programme (defined as a prominence of at least 150 metres) which is open to all radio amateurs, worldwide. There are no restrictions on who may activate Summits, although it is probable that most activators will live in the general area. Chasers and Short Wave Listeners may be in any country, even if there is no Association covering their area.

3.2.2 Management Team

A small Management Team has been appointed by the Award Programme founders and has the responsibility for the overall management of the SOTA Programme. Specifically, it is responsible for creating and maintaining the General Rules and for determining the suitability of proposals made by Associations and approving these (see below). The Management Team

may co-opt other participants or Associates to assist in their duties.

3.2.3 Associations

Logically distinct geographical areas form organisational components of the SOTA Programme, known as Associations, and these adopt the General Rules by agreeing to join the Award Programme.

There are three possible variants of Association:

1. Each DXCC Entity in the world may separately participate in SOTA. The Entity forms an Association.
2. In the case of large DXCC Entities, such as the USA, Subdivision, e.g. into States or provinces, may occur. The area created by Subdivision forms an Association.
3. In the case of relatively small DXCC Entities, or groups of Entities that naturally group together, several Entities may form a single Association.

Each Association must have an Association Manager, who is preferably resident in that association area. The Association Manager (AM) in consultation with the SOTA Management Team (MT) manages the summit research to identify qualifying SOTA summits (minimum P150m) and submits a proposal in the form of a Summit List. He/she also determines parameters that are appropriate to local area needs and creates the Association Reference Manual, which is also submitted to SOTA MT for approval to ensure all aspects conform to SOTA standards. When both the Summit List and the Association Reference Manual have been accepted by the Management Team, the Association is said to be Incorporated. It is included in the SOTA Database for scoring and record keeping and also the SOTA website on SOTAwatch. The SOTA Reflector provides a facility for participants to discuss all aspects of the SOTA Award Programme and is moderated to ensure good taste is shown at all times with no bad language nor sly/offensive/illegal/libellous remarks being made.

3.2.4 Regions

Within an Association's area there may be one or more Regions. These can be based on geographic or political subdivisions.

3.2.5 Participants

There are three Classes of Participant: Activators, Chasers and SWLs. Points are awarded in each Class and awards are available recognising specified levels of achievement.

Teams may be formed to participate in the Activator Class but points scored may accrue only to individuals. Club stations may not participate in their own right as Activators, Chasers or SWLs but individuals may use club call signs as long as these are recorded against the individual. The database provides for this.

3.2.6 Programme Operation

The Programme is managed via the Internet, using web sites, reflectors and e-mail to keep costs to an absolute minimum. The Programme is self-funding through charges for certificates, and donations via the SOTA website Shop <https://www.sota-shop.co.uk/> etc.

The worldwide SOTA web site is at <https://www.sota.org.uk>

A discussion group is available for Expedition reports and other topics directly related to the Programme at <https://reflector.sota.org.uk/>

3.3 Programme Start Date

The Programme commenced on 2 March 2002. Each Association has its own start date, being the date that it became Incorporated. Summits can be claimed at any time after the start date for the responsible Association but not before.

3.4 The Reference System

Each mountain Region in the Association is assigned a unique two-character identifier. Individual Summits within the Region are assigned a number in the range 001 to 999 (it is not anticipated that any Region will exceed a few hundred Summits; if necessary, subdivision will occur).

Within an Association, this creates a unique Reference Number in the form, e.g. **LD-003**. Leading zeros are applied as shown where the number is less than 100. The Reference Number is used throughout the Programme to identify the Summit.

For the sole purpose of unique identification worldwide, an International SOTA Reference Number is created by prefixing the Reference number with the Association identifier. This is either

- The ITU allocated prefix, in the event that Subdivision has not occurred, e.g. G/LD-003
- The ITU allocated prefix plus the subdivision identifier, where Subdivision has occurred, e.g. W2/WE-003, W5O, W7U

To avoid confusion with the Islands on the Air (IOTA) programme, the Summit identifier letters must not be one of the continent abbreviations, namely AF, AN, AS, EU, NA, OC or SA as regions with these two letter codes already exist..

If a summit is repositioned due to more accurate survey measurements, the summit will retain its original reference number if the new highest point is within the Activation Zone of the old highest point; otherwise a new reference will be issued and the old one deleted. When a summit is deleted for any reason, the reference number will not be re-allocated.

3.5 Guidelines for the definition of a Summit

Each Association is required to define a list of Summits that is consistent with the nature of the general terrain in that Association. The definition must take account of the following guiding principles:

1. The Association must have sufficient topology to enable meaningful Summits to be defined. The SOTA Management Team's minimum requirement to meet the worldwide SOTA standard is for a prominence of 150 metres for summits, but we allow for derogation based on Summit Density. Therefore, in a few exceptional circumstances only, and for all those new associations applying since December 2012, this rule has

been applied for those unable to meet the P150m rule, in order for them to function as a P100 association. This is very much the exception and not commonplace. The lower Prominence value for qualification is assessed by the SOTA Management Team, judged by a set of strict and objective rules set out below. Subjective arguments may be listened to, but normally would not sway judgement in favour of varying this rule for anything less than P150m classification for this worldwide award programme. Other award programmes allow for P100 and other criteria – HuMPS, WOTA etc.

The minimum summit prominence that can be accepted in the Programme is 100 metres, see below (6.). In the event that this requirement cannot be met, the Entity or Subdivision will unfortunately be unable to participate in SOTA. Prospective Associations wishing to use a prominence of less than 150 metres will need to be able to offer sound justification for why they should qualify as an Association with less than the P150m standard qualification, and be able to demonstrate how the use of a lower Prominence value will significantly add to the viability of a prospective Association. For guidance, the Management Team will not accept a prominence value of less than 150 metres or 492 feet if summits at 150 metres are more frequent than one per 2,000 sq. km.

2. Summits should be distinct peaks. This means that there must be a vertical separation of at least the association's prominence value between summits and their associated cols (also known as saddles). Peaks separated by a shallow col should be considered as a single summit. This principle ensures that there is a distinct climb associated with every summit.
3. The Programme is intended to be inclusive in nature and, therefore, Summits should not be limited to the highest points in an Association. To encourage participation by as many people as possible, any summit that meets the requirements of principle (1) above should be eligible for inclusion in the programme. An Association Reference Manual that does not include a sufficiently wide range of Summits, when such summits exist within its boundaries, is liable to be rejected by the Management Team.
4. Summits that are accessible by road can still be included in the programme, although operation from within vehicles or the near vicinity of activator's vehicles is not permitted.
5. Where a summit lies upon the boundary of more than one Association, it can be included in the summit list of only one Association. The Association with the largest area of Activation Zone within its boundary will be the Association that the summit will be allocated to, although Activation may take place from anywhere within the Activation Zone. The callsign used will reflect the DXCC entity in which the Activation takes place.
6. Where an Association has a large area with relatively few summits, the Management Team may authorise the use of a prominence of 100 metres for a sub area of the association. The criterion for permitting a lower prominence sub area is to take the total area of that sub area within the Association in square kilometres and divide this by the total number of summits with a prominence of 150 metres. If the result is greater than or equal to 2,000 then a prominence of 100 metres may be authorised for the sub area. This result is known as the "Summit Density" (SD).
 - a. The proposed P100 area must be at least 45% of the original

association area.

- b. The proposed P100 area must be at least 250,000 square km.
- c. The resultant P150 and P100 areas must be contiguous and only one of each per association.

It is recognised that operation from the exact top of the Summit may be difficult or even impossible. It is also important that SOTA operations do not disturb the enjoyment of the mountains by others. Accordingly, each Association shall define the Vertical Distance from the precise summit, within which a Summit operation will be considered valid. This Vertical Distance will define a contour outlining an Activation Zone within which a Summit operation will be considered valid. This Vertical Distance will normally be 25 metres. For other than 25m the AM must provide a justifiable case and also the MT may review this at any time, based on experience.

3.6 Adding and Deleting Summits

The list of Summits for an Association is not necessarily exhaustive. It is acceptable that the list will evolve over time, as the Programme develops within the Association.

Summits can be added to the Programme provided they meet the definition agreed for the Association. A Summit that is added in this way will be valid for general activation from the date that the Reference Number is issued. Activations prior to this start date will not be valid for SOTA.

The Management Team reserves the right to demand sufficient information to confirm that any proposed summit meets the required criteria. Such information may include references in publicly-available independent lists (e.g. www.peaklist.org), official government publications, or the result of detailed analysis of mapping data. In the event that such additional information is not supplied, the summit will not be added to the Programme.

Association updates will only be accepted once per calendar year. Association Managers should nominate a month in which their future updates will take place, update months may be changed a little by MT to spread through the year to avoid excessive workloads in managing updates. The Management Team requires a two month notice of updates to allow these to proceed as per agreed schedule. All update timings are dependent on demand and MT workload.

3.6.1 Nomination of potential summits

Proposals by participants to add or delete summits must be managed by the local Association Manager in the first instance who will coordinate changes to SOTA MT. Participants wishing to nominate potential new summits should provide materials to the appropriate Region Manager and Association Manager which demonstrate that the criteria are met. A reference number will then be issued by the Association Manager, and a start date agreed with the Management Team, after which the new summit will be available for valid activations, but not before.

3.6.2 Deletion of Summits

A summit will be deleted if it is subsequently found to not reach the criteria for inclusion (e.g. due to more accurate mapping becoming available). The process is shown above. Existing credits for activations prior to the deletion date will not be lost.

3.6.3 Updating associations not conforming with P150m summits

Many early associations were set-up without the benefit of sophisticated summit research or analysis software, and so errors in the data for those summits may have been introduced by mistake. In some cases, the qualification factor based on Prominence was mis-understood by some of those making a submission to join SOTA and not picked up by manual analysis within SOTA MT for the same lack of resources.

The SOTA Management Team requires that these errors be corrected. Current P100 associations that, by rule, should have been P150 will be updated regardless of their popularity. In order to level the playing field, world wide, there will be no exceptions to this rule. Technical progress in summit research tools has enabled this to take place. Previous scores accrued will not be affected by these updates.

There are now several P100 associations that require updating to P150m status and these are in the process of revising their summit qualifications. Several more were guided through the process during 2015.

Please note that new Associations that have submitted for P100m status and passed the objective Summit Density criteria since December 2012 will not be affected by this. (See 3.5 No 6)

3.6.4 Period before implementation of a new Association Summit List

Where summits are to be deleted, a period of ‘up to a year’ may be allowed before final deletion to allow participants time to activate or chase summits and complete their awards and for flexibility in timing to process the changes. In both summit deletions and additions, the local Association Manager may request a preferred implementation date, as new summits coming into the programme will present a benefit to participants if they come early.

3.7 Rules for Activators

All Expeditions must use legitimate access routes and comply with any local rules regarding use of the land. In particular, Activators must ensure that they have any necessary permission to operate from their chosen Summit, or that access is customary. Note particularly that it may not be acceptable to camp overnight in any area of mountainous terrain without permission from the landowner. In particular, Activators should be satisfied that there is no indication that access to the summit is forbidden, as access is subject to change. Here, checking access rights means checking websites, maps, notices in the nearest village or tourist centre as well as onsite footpath notices. Activating a summit where permission has not been given or implied by ‘open access’ will invalidate the activation.

3.7.1 Criteria for a valid Expedition

For an expedition to be considered valid, the following criteria must be met:

1. Participants shall be licensed to communicate on the amateur band in use. All stations must operate according to the limitations and privileges of their own license (power, emission mode, frequency or any other limitation). Operation that takes advantage of extra privileges, for example higher power or use of a restricted band segment,

conferred by supervision under a licensee holding a higher license class, is forbidden. The call sign used shall be one the operator is authorized to use individually, without supervision. Note that this restricts the use by a holder of a lower class of license of special call signs (for example club, special event or contest call signs) where such use would require supervision under a holder of a higher-class licensee.

2. All operations must comply with the amateur radio licensing regulations and must use the permitted amateur radio bands of the country in which the Association is based.
3. Operations must not be in, or in the close vicinity of, a motor vehicle. No part of the station may be connected in any way to the motor vehicle.
4. The Operating Position must be within the Activation Zone. The operating position must lie within a closed contour line at the permitted maximum Vertical Distance below the summit. (Typically the contour line is 25 metres below peak height of the summit). The Operating Position is taken to be the position of the operator.
5. All equipment must be carried to the site by the Activation team.
6. All equipment must be operated from a portable power source (batteries, solar cells, etc). Operation is expressly forbidden using permanently installed power sources or fossil-fuel generators of any kind.
7. All operation must comply with all limitations on the use of transmitting equipment that may exist for the Summit.
8. At least one QSO must be made from the Summit to qualify an activation. In order for the activation to qualify for the points attributed to that Summit, a minimum of four QSOs must be made, each of which must be with a different station. QSOs must comprise an exchange of callsigns and signal reports; it is strongly recommended that the summit identifier be given during each contact. Where the summit identifier is not given in each contact (for example in slow CW QSOs) it should be repeated frequently every few QSOs. Note: Summits are commonly mis-identified by chasers when 'spotting' on the SOTA Reflector. Ask the Activator for the summit reference if you have not heard it stated.
9. QSOs with others within the same Activation Zone do not count towards the QSO total.
10. QSOs via terrestrial repeaters do not count towards the QSO total. Contacts via artificial satellites or free balloon borne repeaters are permitted.
11. Activator points accrue to the operator regardless of the callsign used. The operator must be entitled to use the callsign. Multiple operators of the same station may claim activator points. Each individual operator must make the minimum number of QSOs stated above in order to claim Activator points.
12. Activators must submit a log of the Expedition in order to claim points. In the event that a claim is not to be made, Activators are still asked to submit logs so that Chaser claims can be substantiated. Logs may be submitted by filling in an entry form on the SOTA Database web site or as a log file. Full details are on the SOTA web site.
13. A summit that falls exactly on the border between two or more Associations may be

listed only by one Association. The summit may be claimed only by the Association that has the largest area of the Activation Zone within its borders. A valid Activation, however, may take place from anywhere in the Activation Zone including the part of the Activation Zone not covered by the Association which lists the summit. Unless the licensing regulations decree otherwise, the position of the Activator is deemed to be the Operating Position.

14. All SOTA operations are expected to be conducted in the spirit of the programme. Where it is determined that an Activation has not been conducted in the spirit of the Programme, the points for the Activation will be forfeited and other sanctions may be applied.
15. Where it is found that two associations share a border summit, the activator must remain in the Activation Zone for the association/country concerned. Where it is theoretically possible to move a short distance and activate the same summit with a different Association reference number these should be reported to the respective association managers who will resolve the matter of who gets to 'own' the reference number, by discussion. In practice this means haggling and amicable agreement. If the Association Managers cannot agree on a resolution, then the Management Team reserve the right to determine which Association shall retain the summit.

3.7.2 Scoring

The Activator claims the Summit points on an expedition basis, regardless of the total number of QSOs made above the qualifying minimum. A summit may be activated as often as desired, but an individual Activator can only claim points for operation from a particular Summit once in any calendar year. If a subsequent activation in that year takes place at a time when a seasonal bonus has become available, the database will add the seasonal bonus to the Activators score.

QSL cards are not required.

3.7.3 Code of Conduct

Participation in the SOTA programme is open to everybody, although use of certain facilities including SOTAwatch and the SOTA database requires registration. However, the Management Team reserves the right to withdraw permission for use of such facilities, and to remove previously entered data, in the event that any participant behaves in a manner contrary to the aims of SOTA. In such, hopefully rare, cases the decision of the Management Team will be final. Examples of such unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

1. Persistent breaches of the Acceptable Use Policy on SOTAwatch
2. Making database claims for contacts that are not valid for SOTA
3. Threatening or abusing members of the Management Team or other SOTA participants
4. Persistent breaches of SOTA rules
5. Misuse of SOTA software (includes by-passing security checks or masquerading as another user)

6. Behaviour likely to bring SOTA into disrepute

Examples of behaviour likely to bring SOTA into disrepute include a failure to apply the following common-sense provisions:

Activators must not cause any damage to the environment. This includes damage, whether deliberate or resulting from a lack of care, to the mountain itself, walls, fences, livestock, buildings, wildlife, trees, plants etc. Care must also be taken to avoid leaving litter. It is both unsightly and potentially hazardous to livestock and wildlife. Where fire hazards exist, activators must be vigilant to avoid causing fires.

Activators must operate with due consideration for other people and wildlife on the hills. Excessive noise, inconsiderate siting of equipment and antennas, etc. is not acceptable and potentially brings the Programme into disrepute. There can be no justification for trespassing on private property, and the wishes of the landowner must remain paramount. When parking a vehicle in preparation for an activation, care must be taken to avoid obstructing roads, paths and gateways. If your vehicle displays a SOTA sticker, you do not even have to be present to bring SOTA into disrepute!

Both Activators and Chasers must at all times operate within the terms of their license. Participation in the SOTA Programme makes on-air behaviour extremely visible to other users of the amateur bands, and such malpractices as using bad language or causing deliberate interference will not be tolerated.

Chasers must operate with care to help the Activator, who may well be operating in difficult conditions. Orderly and considerate behaviour in calling Activators is essential. Malpractices, such as calling over stations that the Activator is working, repeated tail-ending calls to try and be the last station heard in the pile-up, and calling when you cannot hear the activator, slows down the contact rate for the Activator leading to unnecessarily prolonged stays on the summit. Making over-long overs, giving a full breakdown of your station and asking unnecessary questions delays the Activator and infuriates other Chasers. Tuning up on top of the Activator before calling is the height of bad manners. Persistent disruptive operating by Chasers spoils the enjoyment of operating SOTA for the many, and so sanctions may be applied to those who cause this. Sanctions may include exclusion from the SOTA database and web services for a period of time while persistent disruptors may be penalised by exclusion from SOTA altogether.

A similar rule applies to users of the SOTAwatch on-line facility when breach of the AUP, by posting offensive or unwarranted comments occurs.

The SOTA spot and alert boards are not general message boards for anything other than providing key frequency, mode, time and callsign data. Persistent abusers may face sanctions. The Golden Rule is that all participants are required to operate in a manner that is in keeping with the spirit of the Programme.

3.7.4 Competence to undertake expedition

Activators must be competent to undertake their proposed Expedition and must carry suitable equipment, taking account of the terrain, weather conditions etc. Activators take part in the Programme entirely at their own risk and the Programme in its entirety shall accept no responsibility for injury, loss of life or any other loss.

Activators are reminded that hill climbing is an inherently hazardous activity. Accidents can and do happen in the mountains and the risk is neither increased nor mitigated by the SOTA Programme.

3.8 Rules for Chasers

1. The Chaser must hold an appropriate transmitting licence.
2. The Chaser must make a QSO with the Summit Expedition, in which at least callsigns and two-way reports are exchanged. Wherever possible, the SOTA Reference Number should also be obtained as part of the QSO.
3. With effect from 01-Jan-2004, only one QSO with a given Summit on any one day (defined as 00:00 to 23:59 UTC) counts for points.
4. QSOs via terrestrial repeaters do not count for points. QSOs via satellites, kites and balloons do count for points.
5. Chasers who wish to participate in the award scheme must submit a log showing details of all QSOs with Expeditions for which they wish to claim points.
6. QSL cards are not required, as the SOTA database can be used to verify your QSOs.
7. An Activator may claim Chaser points for QSOs made with Activators on other Summits during his Expedition.
8. The Summit score is claimed for a single QSO with the Expedition. Multiple QSOs with the same Expedition do not attract additional points.

3.9 Rules for Short Wave Listeners (SWL)

1. Anyone can participate in the SWL section, whether they hold an amateur radio licence or not.
2. The SWL must receive a QSO between the Summit Expedition and any other radio amateur, during which at least callsigns and two-way reports are exchanged. This information must be recorded by the SWL. Where the SOTA Reference Number is given as part of the QSO this must be recorded.
3. With effect from 01-Jan-2004, only one QSO with a given Summit on any one day (defined as 00:00 to 23:59 UTC) counts for points.
4. QSOs via terrestrial repeaters do not count for points. QSOs via satellites, kites and balloons do count for points.
5. SWLs who wish to participate in the award scheme must submit a log showing details of all QSOs heard with Expeditions for which they wish to claim points.
6. QSL cards are not required.
7. The Summit score is claimed for hearing a single QSO with the Expedition. Multiple

QSOs heard with the same Expedition do not attract additional points.

3.10 Modes and bands

All modes and amateur radio bands are valid for the Programme.

3.11 Scoring system

A scoring system relating to the height of the Summit ASL must be implemented unless this is clearly and demonstrably impractical (see below). Each summit is worth a certain number of points, dependent upon its height ASL. Six height bands are defined, expressed in metres ASL, and optionally in feet ASL, the values of which are determined on an Association basis. Height bands for an Association are determined by the Association Manager in consultation with the Management Team and must be shown in the Association Reference Manual.

Points are awarded to both Activators and Chasers as follows:

| | |
|--------|-----------|
| Band 1 | 1 point |
| Band 2 | 2 points |
| Band 3 | 4 points |
| Band 4 | 6 points |
| Band 5 | 8 points |
| Band 6 | 10 points |

For Associations containing relatively few peaks, such as Belgium (ON) or the Isle of Man (GD), it may not be appropriate, or indeed possible, to allocate summits to each height band. In such a case, one or more of the higher-value height bands may be omitted.

Note: SOTA MT reserves the right to class non-P150m summits with a zero point score, if required. Normally Band 1 and no scores do not attract any bonus points.

3.11.1 Seasonal bonus option

A seasonal bonus may be made available to all Activators undertaking Expeditions within an Association, at the discretion of the Association Manager in consultation with the Management Team. The seasonal bonus is intended to reflect the fact that for safe travel in the hills during the bonus period, extra safety equipment is necessary plus the skills to use it. The bonus may, for example, be applied to winter conditions where there is significant seasonal variation in temperatures or to other parameters, such as monsoon seasons, summer heat etc.

There shall be only one seasonal bonus in a year in any Region, up to a maximum duration of four months. A winter bonus shall only apply to Expeditions to the higher Summits, a summer bonus will apply to all summits, and in all cases will be three points. The Association Manager in consultation with the Management Team shall determine eligibility of his Association for the seasonal bonus, bearing in mind local safety considerations. He shall also define the inclusive dates that constitute the bonus period and the minimum height of

qualifying Summits.

In large Associations, there are provisions for different seasonal bonus criteria to be defined for different Regions where significant climatic variations make this appropriate. Association Managers should submit such a request, together with supporting evidence, to the Management Team.

3.11.2 Activator scoring precedence

The Activator claims the Summit points on an expedition basis, regardless of the total number of QSOs made above the qualifying minimum. A summit may be activated as often as desired, but an individual Activator can only claim points for operation from a particular Summit once in any calendar year. If a subsequent activation in that year takes place at a time when a seasonal bonus has become available, the database will add the seasonal bonus to the Activators score.

3.12 Documentation

The SOTA document library is maintained as Microsoft Word documents and is published in Adobe PDF format. All SOTA documents must be formatted to accurately conform to the SOTA house style. Templates are available on request.

All documents have a unique document number which is issued by the Management Team to indicate that the document has been officially released. A register is maintained listing all officially released documents.

3.12.1 General rules and the management of the Award Programme

1. The General Rules (this document) provides a framework in which the Programme operates. It is maintained by the Management Team. It is written in English language with as much clarity as possible. Various other language versions are available on the SOTA website too!
2. Associations which are unwilling to abide by the General rules will be unable to provide listed summits that qualify for participation in the SOTA Award scheme. This does not preclude licensed amateurs and shortwave listeners in these countries participating in Activating and Chasing qualified summits in other Associations – as at present.
3. The Management Team, who administer the Award scheme, will make every effort to ensure participating Associations conform to the General rules. Where technology advances allow, a review of the validity of Association lists will take place as required – all Associations may be subject to these periodic reviews. Reviews may find that the status quo is acceptable, that summits no longer qualify or that other summits which would have qualified may be included during an annual revision of the Association manual.
4. No Association is exempt from the conditions prescribed in the General Rules.
5. Where the Management Team, for whatever reason, have made an error, whether through an innocent mistake or poor judgement, they will endeavour to rectify that error, in liaison with the Association, and ensure conformance to the General Rules.

Where this correction will have an effect on the available scoring summits of an Association, then the MT will allow a grace period before implementation of the new Association Summit List (up to a calendar year) to allow participants time to activate or chase summits which will be removed from the programme.

6. Where errors have been identified in summits lists, or where summits are duplicated between Associations, the MT have received full cooperation from the relevant Association Manager to eliminate these discrepancies and ensure that the Association is fully compliant with the General Rules. The majority of these Associations, mainly located in Europe, are now, or shortly will be, fully compliant. The problems faced by the Association Managers have been overcome in a positive manner and in the spirit of cooperation which we all associate with the hobby of amateur radio.
7. SOTA is an International awards scheme administered by a small team of volunteers; SOTA is not a club, participants are not members, and the decision whether or not to take part in this award scheme is the choice of the individual. The various facilities provided free of any charge at the point of use – SOTAwatch, the SOTA database, SOTA Cluster, the Reflector – are funded by donations and by the sale of awards and merchandise; otherwise there is no cost to any radio amateur to take part in this scheme; but it has to be recognized that the ultimate decision as to what qualifies for this award scheme lies with the SOTA Management Team.

3.12.2 Association Reference Manual

Each Association Manager shall create an Association Reference Manual (ARM), which comprises Association-specific data that customises the Programme to the needs of the Association's area.

ARMs shall be published in English and optionally in any other additional language that is appropriate to the Association.

The ARM shall comprise the following sections:

- **Chapter 1 - Change Control**
- **Chapter 2 - Association Reference Data.** At a minimum, this must contain the Association parameters but it may also contain general information of use to prospective participants.
- **Chapter 3 - Summit Reference Data.** This chapter contains the eligible summits in tabular form. The tables may be split into Regions and may also contain Region specific information of use to prospective participants. The minimum information required in the tables is:
 1. The SOTA Reference Number
 2. The name of the Summit. Preferably this should be the name shown on local maps. If no such name is shown then a locally used name may be used. If no locally used name is forthcoming then the summit may be identified by its spot height.
 3. The location, accurate to no worse than 250 metres, using longitude and latitude in signed decimal format. The location may additionally be specified in another format

such as the Maidenhead locator system or a nationally-recognised rectangular reference system.

4. The height of the Summit in metres ASL.
5. The height of the Summit in feet ASL.
6. The score associated with the Summit.

It is the Association Manager's responsibility to maintain the ARM as new Summits are added or other changes become necessary. The Association Manager must send the updated Manual, and associated database files, to the Management Team whenever changes are made. The date on which the changes become effective will be agreed between the Association Manager and the Management Team.

The ARM is authorised by the Management Team. An Association only becomes operational when its ARM has been duly authorised.

3.12.3 Other Documents

Other documents may be produced from time to time.

3.12.4 Precedence

The General Rules have precedence over the Association Reference Manual in case of any conflict. The General Rules also have precedence over all other programme documentation, official or otherwise; e.g. Activator's Guidelines, etc. Where the General Rules have been translated into other languages, the English version has precedence over other language versions in case of any conflict.

3.13 Awards

SOTA is the only award programme offering formal SOTA Awards under its Trade Mark name and logo. Local Association awards may be available but use of the SOTA name or trade-marked logo for any of these requires approval of the MT.

3.13.1 Programme-wide awards

Certificates and plaques are awarded to recognise achievement in the entire SOTA Programme, comprising all Associations.

The categories of award include:

- All Summits award. All summits count, subject to the qualification criteria of Rule 3.7, Rule 3.8 or Rule 3.9, as appropriate.
- Unique Summits award. Each Summit counts only once, regardless of the number of qualifying activations

Certificates will be awarded for 100, 250, 500, 1000, 2500, 5000 points, and so on in sequence, in each award category. Separate certificates are awarded in the Activators, Chasers

and SWL sections.

In the All Summits award category, the following trophies will be awarded upon request:

- “Mountain Goat” trophy for Activators who attain 1000 points
- “Shack Sloth” trophy for Chasers who attain 1000 points
- “SWL” trophy for Short Wave Listeners who attain 1000 points.

All these certificates and trophies are issued upon request, by the Management Team’s Awards Administrator, based on logs uploaded to the on-line database. A charge is made to cover the costs.

Other Awards are issued. These include a Summit to Summit Award, a “SOTA Complete” Award for both activating and chasing summits, a “Mountain Explorer” Award for qualifying summits in a number of different Associations, the corresponding “Mountain Hunter” Award for Chasing summits in a number of different Associations, in more than one continent in the higher categories, awards commemorating the 10th anniversary of Associations and a Microwave Award which has distinctly different criteria for qualification. In addition, there are 12, 10 and 6 metre Challenge awards available.

Details of these awards can be found in the on-line SOTA Shop. (See <https://www.sota-shop.co.uk/>)

From time to time there will also be SOTA Challenges. The first Challenge was to enhance and encourage activity on the previously underused 12 metre band. The SOTA MT will determine when these challenges run and what awards may be given for participation in these awards.

3.13.2 Other SOTA Awards

In addition to Programme-wide certificates and trophies, Associations, individuals, or groups may specify their own award system, using defined SOTA summit data (or a subset of it). Such awards may be defined within the boundaries of a single Association, or across several Associations (e.g. the Alps or the USA). These awards may be defined on the official SOTA website, subject to approval by the Management Team. Assistance with administration of these awards will be available if required.

3.14 Administration

The Management Team administers the Programme on a volunteer basis and has overall responsibility for the operation of the Programme in all Associations. Its decisions are final.

The Management Team shall appoint an Association Manager for each Association, normally a resident national, who is responsible for advising on the Programme’s operation in that Association. In particular, the Association Manager creates and maintains the Association Reference Manual for his Association and obtains content approval from the Management Team. If an Incorporated Association finds itself without an Association Manager for any reason, the responsibility will revert to the Management Team until a new Association Manager can be appointed. In the meantime, any management of that association, such as updating, will be undertaken by the Management Team.

The Association Manager will at his/her discretion appoint Region Managers as required in

each mountainous region of an Association, to provide local knowledge for the Association Manager and the Management Team. The Region Manager can also be contacted to provide advice for would-be Activators planning to visit the area.

The Management Team may appoint ex officio members to assist them in their responsibilities.

3.15 Information dissemination

Summit Activators are encouraged to publicise their intended Expeditions to maximise the opportunity for Chasers to make contact. Internet facilities have been set up for the purpose to which any interested party may subscribe.

Lists of summits that have been allocated numbers will be maintained on the web. The Programme rules for each Association will be published on the web site.

3.16 SOTA frequencies

There are no specified SOTA frequencies but Activators are encouraged to suggest frequencies on which they will be operational for specific Expeditions. Although operations are likely to be QRP, the use of internationally recognised QRP frequencies should be avoided because of QRM from QRO Chasers. It is suggested that Activators should use frequencies sufficiently offset from QRP frequencies to avoid QRM from Chasers.

3.17 Trademarks and Copyright

“Summits on the Air”, SOTA and the SOTA logo are trademarks of the Programme. All documents published by the official SOTA Programme are the copyright of The Programme. No documents or data may be copied or used for commercial or website use without permission.

3.17.1 Use of the SOTA name and logo

The SOTA name and logo may be freely used for non-commercial purposes that are clearly related to the programme. Examples might be the use of the logo on a QSL card, or as part of a personal website.

Commercial organisations wishing to make use of the SOTA name or Logo must first discuss their plans with, and obtain agreement from, the Management Team.

In all cases the SOTA Logo, as displayed, must be unaltered in any way including content, colour and aspect ratio. Its overall size may be adjusted to fit the layout of the document.

Where the SOTA logo is used on a web site, the logo graphic may optionally include a link to the official SOTA website, <https://www.sota.org.uk>. It is not acceptable to link from the SOTA logo graphic to any other site.

SOTA Management Team