Summits on the Air

General Rules

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Table of contents

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 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.

2 Definitions

The following terms are defined and have the meanings shown below. Defined terms are capitalised, e.g. "Activator". Terms that are themselves used within the following definitions are shown herein in *Italics*.

Term	Definition
Activator	An individual or group of individuals that activates a *Summit* for the purposes of *SOTA*
ASL	Above (mean) Sea Level, referring to the height of a *Summit*
Association	An *Entity*, *Subdivision* of an *Entity* or group of *Entities*. The Association has an agreed set of parameters and Summits, which complies with the *General Rules* and which has been registered with and agreed by the *Programme Management Team* (The *Association* is said to be *Incorporated*)
Association Reference Manual	The document produced by each *Association*, containing the *Association* parameters and a listing of all qualifying *Summits* and other such information as may be considered useful to the local running of the *Programme*.
Chaser	An individual who participates in *SOTA* by working *Activators* and submitting claims
Class	The forms that participation in the *Programme* may take. The Classes are *Activator* and *Chaser*
Col	The lowest point along a ridge between two *Summits* (also known as a "saddle")
Entity	A listing on the DXCC List; a counter for DXCC awards. Previously denoted a DXCC "Country". See http://www.remote.arrl.org/awards/dxcc/rules.html for more information
Expedition	A single visit by an *Activator* or team of Activators to a *Summit* in which at least the minimum number of QSOs specified in the *Programme* are made
General Rules	The rules of the Summits on the Air programme, with which all *Associations* and *Participants* must comply.
Incorporated	An Association is said to be incorporated when its *Association Reference Manual* has been accepted by the *Programme Management Team*
International Reference Number	A reference in the form G/LD-003 or W-VA/BR-001 which uniquely identifies a *Summit* throughout the *Programme*
IOTA	Islands on the Air. A programme administered by the Radio Society of Great Britain in which contacts with islands or island groups throughout the world can be claimed for awards
Participant	Any individual who is active within the *Programme*, including *Activators*, *Chasers* and *Short Wave Listeners*
Programme (The)	Summits on the Air (abbreviated to *SOTA*)
Programme	The team charged with overall, worldwide administration of the

Term	Definition
Management Team	*Programme*
Reference Number	A reference in the form LD-003 which uniquely identifies a *Summit* within an *Association*
Region	A convenient geographical subdivision of the *Association* into smaller areas of land for administrative purposes.
Relative Height	The height of a *Summit*, relative to the surrounding countryside. This is not related to height ASL, except where the surrounding countryside includes coastal areas
Set of Rules	The complete rules of the *Programme* for an *Association*, comprising the General Rules and the Association Reference Manual
Short Wave Listener	An individual who participates in *SOTA* by listening to and logging the activities of *Activators* and submitting claims
SOTA	Summits on the Air (the *Programme*)
Subdivision	The process by which a large DXCC *Entity* is subdivided into several smaller areas, each of which have the same status as a DXCC *Entity*
Summit	A mountain peak that meets the *Association's* qualification criteria

3   Programme 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.

The Programme is intended encourage activity from clearly defined peaks, including major mountains. To enable participation in the Programme to be as wide ranging as possible, lesser peaks can also be included. An incremental scoring system recognises the higher peaks accordingly. The Programme does not accept operation from or in the immediate vicinity of motor vehicles.

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

3.2   Programme structure

3.2.1   Scope

The Programme 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   Programme Management Team

A small Programme Management Team is responsible for the overall management of the SOTA Programme. Specifically, it is responsible for creating and maintaining the General Rules and for determining the suitability proposals made by Associations (see below).

3.2.3   Associations

Logically distinct geographical areas form organisational components of the SOTA Programme, known as Associations, by adopting the General Rules. 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 appoint an Association Manager. The Association Manager determines parameters that are appropriate to local needs. He then creates the Association Reference Manual and submits it as a proposal for participation to the Programme Management Team. When the Association Reference Manual has been accepted by the Programme Management Team, the Association is said to be Incorporated.

3.2.4   Regions

Within an Association's area there may be one or more mountain Regions. These should be distinct geographically or geologically. From a practical perspective, the number of Regions should be limited to a maximum of twelve.

3.2.5 Participants

There are three Classes of participant: Activators, Chasers and SWLs. Teams may be formed to participate in the Activator Class. Points are awarded in each Class and awards are available recognising specified levels of achievement.

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, etc. The worldwide SOTA web site is at http://www.sota.org.uk. A discussion group is available for notification of Expeditions and other topics directly related to the Programme, at http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/summits.

3.3 Programme start date

The Programme commences 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.

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 description. 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. W-VA/BR-001

To avoid confusion with the Islands on the Air (IOTA) programme, the Summit identifier letters must <u>not</u> be one of the continent abbreviations, namely AF, AN, AS, EU, NA, OC or SA.

3.5 Guidelines for the definition of a Summit

Each Association is required to determine a strategy for defining 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 minimum height for a Summit is 150m above its surroundings. In the event that this guideline cannot be met, the Entity or Subdivision will unfortunately, be unable to participate in SOTA.

2. Summits should be distinct peaks. In general, this means that there should be a minimum vertical separation 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. As Associations will have widely differing mountain characteristics, the Framework

Programme does not specify a minimum separation value. This is for the Association Manager to determine.

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 suitably wide range of Summits, when such peaks exist within its boundaries, is liable to be rejected by the Management Committee.

4. Summits that are accessible by road can still be included in the programme, though operation from vehicles is not permitted.

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.

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.

3.6.1   Activation of potential summits

Activators of potential new summits should provide materials to the appropriate Region Manager and Association Manager, prior to the Expedition, which demonstrate that the criteria are met. A reference number will then be issued by the Association Manager. If the summit is activated before a reference number has been issued then points may, at the Association Manager's discretion, be retrospectively claimed for the expedition, but only if a reference number for the summit is subsequently issued.

3.6.2   Deletion of Summits

A Summit will be deleted if it fails to meet the criteria (e.g. due to more accurate mapping). Existing credits for the summit, for activation prior to its deletion, will be retained.

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. Note particularly that it may not be acceptable to camp overnight in any area of mountainous terrain, without permission from the landowner.

3.7.1   Criteria for a valid Expedition

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

1. The method of final access to the Summit must be "person powered". Valid methods include hiking, skiing, mountain biking.

2. All equipment must be carried to the site by the Activator team.

3. 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.

4. All operation 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.

5. All operation must comply with any limitations on the use of transmitting equipment that may exist for the Summit.

6. At least four QSOs must be made from the Summit. QSOs with others on the same summit do not count towards the QSO total.

7. QSOs via terrestrial repeaters do not count towards the QSO total.

8. 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.

9. 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 web site or as a log file. Full details are on the SOTA web site.

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.

QSL cards are not required.

3.7.3 Care for the environment

Activators must not cause any damage to the environment. This includes damage to the mountain itself, walls, fences, livestock, buildings, etc. Any Activator who is found to have deliberately or carelessly caused such damage may be, at the Programme Management Team's discretion, excluded from the programme.

Activators are required to operate in a manner that is in keeping with the spirit of the Programme.

Activators must operate with due consideration for other people on the hills. Excessive noise, inconsiderate siting of equipment and antennas, etc. is not acceptable and potentially brings the Programme into disrepute. Evidence of such behaviour may result, at the Programme Management Team's discretion, in exclusion from 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 do so entirely at their own risk and the Programme in its entirety shall accept no responsibility for injury, loss of life or any other loss.

3.8 Rules for Chasers

1. 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.

2. Only one QSO per Expedition counts for points. When an Expedition comprises several team members, only one QSO with the entire Expedition counts for points.

3. QSOs via terrestrial repeaters do not count for points.

4. 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.

5. QSL cards are not required.

6. An Activator may claim Chaser points for QSOs made with Activators on other Summits during his Expedition.

3.8.1 Scoring

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. 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.

2. Only one QSO per Expedition counts for points. When an Expedition comprises several team members, only one QSO with the entire Expedition counts for points.

3. QSOs via terrestrial repeaters do not count for points.

4. 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.

5. QSL cards are not required.

3.9.1 Scoring

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 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

The height banding must be constructed in such a way that it encourages operation from the highest peaks in the Association. Therefore, Band 6 should only apply to a small proportion, say 10%, of Summits. Conversely, a reasonable number of Summits must fall into Band 1 to encourage lower level participation. Again, as a guideline 10% of Summits is acceptable.

3.11.1 Alternative scoring strategy option

Where it can be shown that a scoring system based on altitude is demonstrably impractical then the Association Manager shall propose an alternative scoring system for approval by the Programme Management Team. Such a system must take into account the full range of Summits in the Association.

It shall be the Association Manager's responsibility to establish the need for such an alternative scoring system and to provide evidence to the satisfaction of the Programme Management Team.

3.11.2 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. This can be applied to winter conditions where there is significant seasonal variation in temperatures or to other parameters, such as monsoon seasons, etc. There shall be only one such period in a year, up to a maximum duration of four months. The bonus shall only apply to Expeditions to the higher Summits and shall be, in all cases, three points. The Association Manager shall determine eligibility of his Association for the seasonal bonus and shall define the inclusive dates that constitute the bonus period and the minimum height of qualifying Summits.

3.11.3 Activator scoring precedence

In the event that an Activator activates a Summit more than once during the year, he may claim points for any one Expedition. If one expedition was during the period that the seasonal bonus was in operation, then he can claim that expedition together with the higher score.

3.12 Documentation

The General Rules (this document) provides a framework in which the Programme operates. Each Association creates an Association Reference Manual, which comprises Association-specific data that customises the Programme to the needs of the Association's area. The Association Reference Manual 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 may be split into Regions and may also contain Region specific information of use to prospective participants

The Association Reference Manual is created by the Association Manager and authorised by the Programme Management Team. An Association only becomes operational in the Programme when its Association Reference Manual has been duly authorised.

Association Reference Manuals are maintained by the Association Manager and are published as downloadable documents in Adobe PDF format, on the SOTA web site.

3.12.1 Tabulation

All Summits eligible for the SOTA award shall be shown in the Association Reference Manual, subdivided into Regions as required. The minimum information required in the tables is:

1. The SOTA Reference Number.

2. The name of the Summit. Where no name exists, the bearing and distance from the nearest point named on maps likely to be used by Activators should be stated.

3. The location, accurate to no worse than 250 metres, using the generally accepted reference system of the country in which the Association is based. The Maidenhead locator system is not considered adequate for this requirement. Nationally recognised rectangular reference systems or latitude and longitude are acceptable.

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.

New Summits will initially be shown on the web site but it is the Association Manager's responsibility to maintain the Association Reference Manual as new Summits are added. The Association Manager must make the updated manual available upon request and, in any case, at least once per year on the anniversary of becoming an Association.

3.12.2 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.

3.13 Awards

3.13.1 Programme-wide awards

Certificates and plaques are awarded to recognise achievement in the entire SOTA Programme, comprising all Associations. Certificates will be awarded for 100, 250 and 500 points. Separate certificates are awarded in the Activators, Chasers and SWL sections.

"Mountain Goat" plaque for Activators who attain 1000 points.

"Shack Sloth" plaque for Chasers who attain 1000 points.

"SWL" plaque for Short Wave Listeners who attain 1000 points.

Endorsements will be issued for attachment to the plaques for each increment of 200 beyond 1000 points.

Certificates and plaques are issued upon request, by the Programme Management Team based on logs lodged on the Internet. A charge is made to cover the costs.

3.13.2 Association sponsored awards

In addition to Programme-wide, certificates and plaques, Associations may define their own award system, which is administered by the Association Manager. These award systems must be defined in the Association Reference Manual.

3.14 Administration

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

The Programme Management Team shall appoint an Association Manager for each Association, 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 agrees its contents with the Programme Management Team.

The Association Manager will at his discretion, appoint Region Managers as required in each mountainous region of an Association, to provide local knowledge for the Association Manager and the Programme Management Team. The Region Manager can also be contacted to provide advice for would-be Activators planning to visit the area.

3.15 Information dissemination

Summit Activators will be encouraged to publicise their intended Expeditions to maximise the opportunity for Chasers to make contact. An Internet "reflector" has 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.

Claims will be submitted via forms set up on the Programme's 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. As operations are likely to be QRP, the use of internationally recognised QRP frequencies should be considered.

3.17 Trademarks and Copyright

"Summits on the Air", SOTA and the SOTA logo are trademarks of the Programme. All documents published by *The Programme* are the copyright of *The Programme*.

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 web site.

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