

# Leeds University Union

## Code of Good Practice for: LUUSS

---

*Caving is an activity with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in this activity should be aware and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.*

CAVING IS A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SPORT. Although caving accidents are relatively rare, there is always a risk of the unknown occurring. In all cave rescues more than 95% of incidents are due to inexperience and poor training. It is for this reason that we as a club make sure that every beginner trip is supervised and supported by experienced club members. ULSA is an exceptional student caving club in that many of its older members stay on after graduation to help out.

The activities of the club include:

- Organisation of caving trips both within the UK and overseas;
- Organisation of 'novice' trips for those with little or no caving experience;
- Provision of a pool of caving equipment, available to members via the club's tacklemaster;
- Organisation of technical training sessions;
- Promotion of cave conservation;
- Maintenance of a library of caving journals, books, surveys, etc, including an archive of club material, to which members have access;
- Organisation of social events
- Participation in the wider UK and international caving community.

The Caving club will run different types of trips ranging from trips for novice to experienced cavers. First to be discussed will be the club novice trips which require an experienced leader, experienced members leading novices on a trip should be aware of the experience of each individual on the trip, this level of experience should be logged. An experienced member should feel comfortable leading the trip and should be able to confidently interpret a guide book and relate the description of a cave to the ability of the group as a whole. Throughout the trip the leader should be aware of the tiring nature of the cave environment particularly the affects this has on novice cavers. On trips in which none of the participants are novices (that is, where all participants have taken part in at least one caving trip), each participant takes personal responsibility for health and safety matters. The Union should be informed of whom is attending a club trip and to where.

Private caving trips may be organised by experienced club members who will have gained their knowledge of caving and technique over many hours spent underground and through practice of these techniques. The finances, etc. For such meetings are not organised through the club. Club members may borrow club equipment for such meetings, but, as always, are themselves responsible for checking its safety and suitability, the club and its officers carry no responsibility for such meetings.

Trips may be organised outside of the UK. These may be either club or private meetings, typically of one-week duration. Such meetings may need special arrangements for rescue and other insurance.

Caving can pose the risk of exhaustion and hypothermia. For these reasons cavers are advised on appropriate clothing to wear underground. LUUSS will also advise members to have a substantial breakfast before embarking underground and to take high energy foods with them. It is important that members advise other members, however it remains the individual's responsibility to ensure that they have eaten a proper breakfast in order to have the energy required to participate in a very strenuous activity.

The trip leader is there to guide, train and supervise.

Caving trips are varied. Most caves and trips within them have unique features, and factors such as weather conditions and the make-up of the team have a strong influence of the difficulty of the trip. For these reasons, any system based on grading caves, trips within caves or cavers themselves will inevitably fall far short of either a workable or safe system. The only possible system that can be applied to underpin the 'code of conduct' for caving safety is that of *personal responsibility*. Safety aspects of this Code of Conduct are based on this.

The only exception to the full 'personal responsibility' ethos is when complete novices are involved. In this case, a separate category of trip ('Novice trip') is established with its own particular recommendations.

Once cavers have been on their first trip, inexperienced cavers should seek advice from those more experienced when deciding whether to join a team on a particular caving trip, and should also make their level of experience known to all other members on the team. Relatively inexperienced cavers should also seek advice from those more experienced on caving and caving techniques generally and gain competence themselves via reading, discussing, training on the surface and practise underground. However, it ultimately remains each

individual's responsibility to judge their own level of competence, and to ensure their own safety and that of others.

It is also the responsibility of the individual to bring to the attention of the committee any known medical condition or previous injuries that may affect their or other club members safe participation within the sport.

To minimise the number and seriousness of incidents underground it is good practise:

- For all those on the team to brief themselves on the details of the trip;
- To choose the trip appropriate to the make-up of the team, or vice versa;
- To choose an appropriate call out time;
- To take note of local conditions and the weather forecast;
- First aid kit is left with vehicle

For day-trips, the most appropriate procedure for setting up a callout and reporting back will probably be by telephone. For weekend or longer trips, the normal procedure is by entering callouts in the club logbook; if all those present are going caving simultaneously, even on different trips, it is good practise to back up such call-outs by telephone to someone remaining on the surface.




If the team does not return within its call-out time, then action **MUST** be taken. Exactly what action is taken will depend on the make-up of the 'missing' team, the type caving trip they are undertaking, the weather, the availability of the experienced club cavers in the vicinity for an immediate response, etc. If feasible, a normal first step would be to check for the team's return first at their vehicle, and then at the cave entrance. If any serious cause for concern remains, then the local cave rescue organisation must be alerted (call 999 ask for police then ask for cave rescue) and put on standby or called out for rescue as appropriate.

In the case of an accident or incident underground, the actions to be taken by the team involved are so dependent on the circumstances that few useful recommendations can be made in a document of this type. Only those on the spot can decide whether to continue with the trip, or return as a team to the surface, to send some members out to call in outside help, or to stay put or move to a safer part of the cave and wait for help to arrive.

The club equipment will be first made available to LUUSS members as opposed to ULSA members. The equipment shall be maintained in accordance to the risk assessment.

---

We the undersigned agree to uphold the above code of good practise

President	Name	Christophe Fearn	Signature	
Secretary	Name	<del>Ian F</del> PEACHEY	Signature	
Treasurer	Name	JAMES HARDING	Signature	
Date				