

Leeds University Union Caving Society
University of Leeds Speleological Association



Code of Practice

September 2019

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Introduction

The Leeds University Union Caving Society (LUUCaS) is a student run club that undertakes caving trips for members from novice level through to more technical and challenging trips for the more experienced. Over each university year the club provides training to new and existing members to develop these skills which eventually will enable them to gain the technical and physical capabilities to plan and carry out their own caving trips, and potentially pass these skills on to future members. LUUCaS, nor any persons teaching, instructing, leading or seconding during LUUCaS activities, claim to do these actions in any professional capacity with official qualifications; rather LUUCaS, and such persons, use their knowledge and experience to voluntarily help LUUCaS members experience caving recreationally.

The aim of the LUUCaS Code of Practice is to outline key information about LUUCaS and what the LUUCaS committee is responsible for and what it is not responsible for during LUUCaS activities.

If you want a more informal, friendly (and less dry) introduction to caving with LUUCaS see our [Caving without Tears handbook](#).

Club organisation

LUU Caving Society (LUUCaS) is a caving club run primarily by students as a Leeds University Union society, comprising of University of Leeds students (and some students from other Leeds universities, such as Leeds Art University). University of Leeds Speleological Association (ULSA) comprises of both LUUCaS members as well as ex-members of LUUCaS (or formerly LUUSS) or non-student members, often referred to as 'older members'. LUUCaS members are automatically ULSA members, while ULSA members are only also members of LUUCaS if they still reside at university. This is an exceptional club in that many members having left university continue to cave with ULSA and therefore help train and lead trips for LUUCaS, ensuring experience within the club is never lost and a strong network with our alumni is maintained.

Membership

Membership is required for the majority of trips and training sessions (the exception being Give-It-A-Go trips and other day trips that are advertised as not requiring membership). This is mainly for insurance purposes, but a small chunk of the membership cost goes back to the club's reserves.

Membership gives you:

- Equipment use from our gear store, including ropes and appropriate caving equipment
- Ability to come on the majority of club trips and training sessions
- Access to our training sessions for University of Leeds students at the EDGE climbing wall, featuring a bunch of experienced and helpful members that will teach you everything they can about caving (*access is currently £5.50 per session for non-University of Leeds students but we are currently working on a better access arrangement for our non-Uni of Leeds members*)
- ULSA membership (i.e. membership of the overall Leeds caving club)
- BCA (British Caving Association) membership and third-party liability insurance, which covers your access to caves on private land and public liability in case something goes wrong

The membership form will collect essential details such as contact information, medical information, dietary information. This information will only be used for things, such as trip organisation, membership and insurance, therefore may be shared with necessary third parties (for example, with the BCA for insurance or the EDGE for training access).

The cost of membership as of September 2019 is...

Annual LUUCaS membership	£18
Semester LUUCaS membership	£12

Trips

LUUCaS organises many trips throughout the year, many of which can be classified as day trips or weekend trips. Some trips may not require membership, especially nearer the start of a semester, including Give-It-A-Go trips.

Costs may vary from trip to trip, this will be advertised in the accompanying social media post/email, but as of September 2019 prices are typically...

Day trips - £10

Weekend trips - £30

GIAG - £20

Tickets for trips will be advertised via social media/email before they become available for sale. Typically, they will be available for purchase around a week to half a week before a trip and will be taken offline the *Wednesday* before a trip. Places on trips may be available after tickets are taken offline depending on availability. If you can no longer attend a club trip, let the committee know so we can attempt to resell the ticket and possibly refund you depending on whether food or transport has been bought for you already. Please only let the committee resell places since we need to gather information on who is coming on our trips (dietary requirements, medical information etc).

Specific details for each trip should accompany each social media post/email, however contact the official club page or email if in doubt over anything.

There will always be a limited number of spaces available on any one trip, due to leaders/drivers availability and group sizes, although the committee will aim to accommodate everyone.

What occurs during a caving trip

During a caving trip, groups will enter a cave system to explore a cave system, typically with an intended route using cave descriptions and rigging topos (guides). They may enter and exit the system at the same point (a return trip or a round trip), or enter at one point or exit at a different point (an exchange trip or a pull-through trip). The cave may be horizontal (involving walking, stooping, crawling, free climbs etc) or vertical (involving ropes and Single Rope Technique as well). Caving groups consist of approx. 4 to 7 people total including one leader and one or two seconders. The leader is in charge of the group and the seconder(s) will aid the leader.

Day trips

These trips typically involve heading out into caves within the Yorkshire Dales or Derbyshire. Everyone will meet at approx. 9:00am at Jerusalem Chapel, the tackle store for most outdoor societies near the EDGE. Members will gather any required caving kit and tackle and pack it into vehicles outside and then set off to their destination. There may be a stop for breakfast at a café on the way as an opportunity to have a big meal to ensure your energy is maintained underground. Everyone is encouraged to eat a lot before trips and bring 'cave food' (usually a Mars bar or gummy sweets etc.) underground. Vehicles will drive to as close to the cave entrance as possible, where members will get changed into their caving gear and then set off for caving. Normally, groups will be underground by approx. 12:00pm and out by approx. 17:00pm, however this could vary depending on both the trip and the group. After arriving back at the vehicles, members will change into a spare set of dry clothes and will drive back to Jerusalem Chapel to unpack all of the day's caving gear - this may be any time in the evening or night, typically by 20:00 or 21:00pm.

Weekend trips

These trips involve heading to further afield caving regions, typically, from Friday evening to Sunday evening staying at caving huts or camping. The caving regions LUUCaS go to includes the Yorkshire Dales, Derbyshire, Mendip and South Wales. A definitive plan for a weekend trip varies from trip to trip. Typically, everyone will meet at 18:00pm at Jerusalem Chapel and members will gather any required caving kit and tackle and pack it into vehicles outside and then set off to their destination. There may be a stop for food on the way, especially for longer drives, however members should eat beforehand or bring food for when they arrive at the hut. A breakfast will be provided on the Saturday and Sunday mornings and dinner will be provided on the Saturday evening – we recommend bringing other snacks (including caving snacks for during the day) if you wish. Subject to the weather and leader availability, there will be caving trips on both Saturday and Sunday (with Sunday trips typically being shorter). Alternative activities may occur (such as a short walk or visit to a local town), however these are not organised in any official capacity and therefore the committee do not take responsibility for these activities. In addition to personal caving items, members are required to bring additional items for weekend trips, such as a sleeping bag, toiletries or a sleeping mat.

Give-It-A-Go trips and trips not requiring membership

The club may organise trips not requiring membership; however, non-members are required to abide by all of the guidelines/risk assessments/documents during trips, in effect becoming temporary members for insurance purposes. These trips allow people to have a taste to caving with LUUCaS without having to commit to membership. Due to the nature of our Insurance, membership must be obtained if multiple trips are attended outside of GIAGs.

Non-LUUCaS committee organised trips/ULSA trips/personal trips

In addition to LUUCaS committee organised trips, LUUCaS or ULSA members (including some committee members) may advertise trips through social media, at training or at socials that are not LUUCaS committee organised trips.

The distinction between a LUUCaS committee organised trip and non-LUUCaS organised trip may be ambiguous, especially to newer members of the club, but as a rough guide: LUUCaS organised trips would consist of them being organised by the committee (possibly in conjunction with some other members); using the LUU for organisation (e.g. hiring transport, online ticket sale system); it being advertised in a more organised fashion (for example, a Facebook post detailing the trip, it being listed on the club calendar as a LUUCaS event). These trips comply with the LUU's planning regulations with a LUU approved procedure in the case of an incident or emergency.

Meanwhile, a non-LUUCaS organised trip would be organised by someone/some people that wish to go caving with a group of peers rather than in any instructing capacity (although those organising may happen to be on the LUUCaS committee.) In this sense, all persons on the trip assume themselves responsible for checking over any club kit that may be borrowed and return it in the same state – borrowing club kit from the gear store does not make a trip LUUCaS organised. Personal trips do not use the LUU for organisation and would not be advertised as formally - for example: a Facebook post informally asking if anyone wants to go away for the weekend; it being organised with members directly over group message; it not being advertised on the Facebook page at all, it using the ULSA mailing list etc.

LUUCaS organised trips would therefore comply with the LUU during planning and in the event of incidents/emergencies, while non-LUUCaS organised trips fall outside of the remit of the LUUCaS

committee and the LUU. This is not attempt by the LUUCaS committee to shirk organisation, to forgo responsibility over trips, rather it is to encourage independent trip organisation, while allowing members without their own caving kit to still attend such trips whilst having access to necessary caving kit.

Independent trips are not an attempt by the LUUCaS committee to shirk organisation or forgo responsibility for the trips, rather an opportunity for members to develop independently, even if they do not have their own personal equipment. We encourage all members to follow the Union procedures appropriately and use utmost care when planning and executing their own trips.

If there is any confusion over whether a trip is LUUCaS organised or not, the LUUCaS committee should be contacted and we can clarify the situation.

Training

The club runs training sessions at the EDGE, so LUUCaS and ULSA members can learn and practise rope techniques, rigging, rescue procedures etc. Training sessions are predominantly organised by LUUCaS for newer LUUCaS members, with the help of some ULSA members, including the training officer (a joint ULSA-LUUCaS position).

Many trips involve rope skills, Single Rope Technique (SRT), to travel within a cave and a certain level of SRT training maybe required for such trips – whether training is required for a trip will be advertised with each social media post/email. Unfortunately, failure to have enough training for a specific trip may lead to a member being refused entry from a trip.

LUUCaS takes ultimate responsibility for ensuring safety and good practice during these training sessions. The 'ULSA Edge Training Wall Risk Assessment' outlines the steps taken to mitigate any risk during training sessions, but it should be acknowledged there is still a chance of injury or death. Note that caving trips with some aspect of training (using SRT underground, rigging practise, leadership skills) are not training sessions. Each individual should understand their capabilities before signing up to vertical trips and check with a leader if they are unsure.

Kit

LUUCaS membership allows access to the club's tackle store of caving equipment, including rope, SRT kits, over suits, wellies, metal work etc. Both LUUCaS and ULSA use the same tackle store, and the tackle officer (a joint LUUCaS and ULSA position) is in charge. Personal items (such as warm base-layers, socks, medication, cave food) are required for any trip, with the individual responsible for their clothing and other items detailed in the separate 'kit list' document. Failure to bring appropriate clothing may result in members being refused entry for a trip. If you require any medication to be taken underground in from the committee prior to the trips and your trip leader on the day.

Club equipment will be first made available to new LUUCaS members, then to established LUUCaS members, and finally to ULSA members.

Club equipment will be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. It will be subjected to regular checks by the tackle officer. Equipment deemed unusable or unsafe will not be used on trips: personal protection equipment (PPE) and non-PPE items will be repaired or retired. PPE includes helmets, sit harnesses, jammers, descenders, carabineers, maillons, rope etc. Despite steps taken to mitigate equipment failure, there is still a risk of equipment failing and subsequently causing injury or death. LUUCaS will take responsibility for maintaining equipment

kept in the tackle store, while those borrowing equipment from the tackle store have a responsibility to themselves and others on the trip to ensure that PPE is in full working order. For newer members, each trip leader should know how to check that PPE is being used safely to the best of their knowledge (e.g. harnesses are worn correctly, carabiners are screwed up before a new member enters a pitch). There is an expectation that more established members, with more training and experience, should be able to use their PPE correctly without a trip leader needing to check - however if a member is in doubt over their PPE, they should check with the trip leader/second or a more experienced member.

Calendar

LUUCaS typically offers 3 to 4 organised weekend trips per semester with many day trips and socials planned around these. The most up to date calendar can be found at ulsa.org.uk/calendar.

Training is offered weekly during the academic semester on Tuesdays at the EDGE climbing wall, 8-10pm, followed by a pub social. It is strongly advised you attend as many training sessions as possible in order to learn SRT for more complex, vertical trips offered later in the semester and learn rigging and leadership skills.

As of September 2019...

Abseiling social	30 th Sep
GIAG	13 th Oct
Mendip Weekend	18 th – 20 th Oct
Pennine Hut Weekend	8 th – 10 th Nov
CHECC Weekend	22 nd – 24 th Nov
Xmas Weekend	6 th – 8 th Dec
Xmas Cracker Day trip	14 th Dec
Other day trips	Updated on ulsa.org.uk/calendar
Semester 2 dates	To be confirmed, see ulsa.org.uk/calendar

Contacting the committee

The committee can be contacted via the club email (leedsunicaving@gmail.com), messaged on our social media accounts (facebook.com/leedscaving ; instagram.com/leedscaving), and we have a more informal facebook group (facebook.com/groups/leedscaving) for members of LUUCaS and ULSA.

If you have any queries about trips, caving, the club etc. please check ulsa.org.uk/freshers/, Caving without Tears, the LUUCaS caving kit list or the accompanying social media posts/emails first. Please try not to contact committee members via their personal social media, unless there is an emergency.

Health and safety

Risk assessments

LUUCaS provides risk assessment for caving trips and training in two separate risk assessments including a statement of general policy. These can be found on the luu.org.uk/caving/, ulsa.org.uk/documents/ or can be requested from the committee.

Entry on to trips

LUUCaS aim to be accommodating as possible, as trips are aimed at the skill level and fitness of members coming on a trip. However, there may be some instances where a member's skill level and/or fitness may not be suitable for a planned trip (especially harder, longer SRT trips near the

end of a semester), and members may not be able to attend a trip. However, the committee would try to organise alternative, suitable trips if requested and leaders are available.

If a member's fitness or medical needs is continuously causing serious issues over multiple trips (inability to climb, moving very slowly etc) to the point where the committee/ trip organisers/ leaders/ seconders feel that coming on caving trips becomes unsafe to themselves or others, they may be asked to improve their fitness till they can attend trips again or prevented from attending trips altogether.

Sometimes members may disclose or develop medical conditions that mean attending a specific caving trip or caving altogether would not be suitable. Although the committee/ trip organisers/ leaders/ seconders will make an effort to make an informed decision, we are not medically trained to make this decision and do not take responsibility for any consequences as a result. If In doubt seek professional advice.

Circulating medical needs

Trip members should disclose medical condition(s) in the online ticket sign-up form, including any medication they should take underground. The committee will make a note of medical condition(s) and medicine needed to be taken underground. The leader of each caving group will ask everyone before caving whether they are taking medicine underground.

Incident and emergency procedures

Note - these procedures are idealistic and purposefully ambiguous as any action taken during an incident or emergency would be context specific and at the discretion of those participating on the trip.

Incidents and emergencies when underground

In the event of an incident in a cave, the participants should:

- Assess the danger
- Where possible remove themselves, then other participants and the causality from danger. *No member of the team should put themselves at risk of becoming a second casualty.*
- Stabilise the casualty and formulate a plan to deal with the situation; the most experienced caver (ideally the leader) should formulate the plan.
- First aid kits contain prompt sheets for those assessing a casualty allowing appropriate notes to be taken, for effective relaying of Information to emergency services. This is a guide, Influenced by first aiders, but should not be relied upon.
- If necessary and possible, two members should leave the cave and get help, while leaving at least one other person with the causality.
- The member(s) leaving to get help should aim to make notes to relay to those above ground, details including time, nature and treatment of injuries, location, number of casualties etc .
- The member(s) and causality staying behind should keep warm, sheltered, monitor the casualty and give first aide.
- Once above ground, participants raising the alarm should alert cave rescue, this involves following the call-out procedure listed below.

First aid kits

Each caving group will take a first aid kit that is appropriate for caving. The club provides first aid kits containing: a marker pen, duct tape, foil blanket, 500mg paracetamol, 300mg aspirin, dextrose tablets, tea light, lighter, bandage, sterile solution, dressing, trauma dressing, surgical gloves, cleaning wipes. Additionally, each caving group will take a group shelter.

Call-out procedure

Before every caving trip a call-out must be left; the purpose is to ensure an overdue caving group is not left underground for an extended period of time, especially if they are lost or are injured for instance.

A trip leader, seconder or another experienced member leaves the following call-out info with an individual that understands the call-out procedure:

- Name of everyone on trip
- The cave and route being done
- Vehicle registration
- Nature of members on the trip (i.e. competency, experience)
- Any medical information (asthma, diabetes etc)
- Call-out time - what time to inform cave rescue about the overdue group(s)

This can be left via phone call or on a call-out/destination board in a caving hut etc. (If using a call-out/destination board, make sure other people that understand the call-out procedure will see it.) Once everyone is out of the cave and back at the vehicle/caving hut, the trip leader will let the individual know and cancel call-out. The individual's phone number should be written on paper in case the trip leader's/seconder's phone number runs out of power, so someone else can cancel call-out.

If the call-out time is missed, then the individual with the call-out alerts cave rescue.

Alerting Cave Rescue

If the call-out time is missed, then the individual with the call-out carries out the following:

- Call 999
- Ask for the 'police'. Say which county you are in as mobiles may be redirected to the wrong place
- Ask the police for 'cave or fell rescue'
- Describe where you are (description/grid reference)
- Describe the problem (e.g. overdue cavers, group of 5, car parked at X, colour and reg #)
- Stay by the phone or in an area with mobile reception (cave rescue will return your call and ask for additional information)

After an incident/emergency

Any incident that required external help or medical treatment (cave rescue, emergency services etc.) shall be communicated to the committee and reported to the LUU via the committee (the president as a primary contact).

In the event of serious injury or death, the following procedure shall be used to disclose information:

- Comply with the emergency services and cave rescue
- Contact the University of Leeds Security Services and LUU as soon as possible and necessary information will be provided

Other important documents

To facilitate the training of caving techniques and planning of trips, LUUCaS and ULSA together have developed guides and risk assessments to ensure the full implementation of safe practices with regards to these caving activities, whether underground or on surface training.

These include: the general risk assessment; the EDGE training wall risk assessment; LUUCaS Code of Conduct; ULSA Caving Without Tears Handbook; LUUCaS Caving Kit List.

Current versions of these documents can be found on the LUU website, the ULSA website or can be provided upon request by the LUUCaS committee.

Disciplinary procedures

The LUUCaS committee shall enforce disciplinary procedures in response to complaints in order to ensure every member is acting safe and appropriately during LUUCaS activities.

If a complaint is made against a member to the committee, appropriate action shall be taken that is specific to the nature and context of the complaint. In some instances, the committee may have to consult with more experienced members outside of the committee, especially in regard to safety. Complaints may include, for instance: a member acting unsafe (intentionally or unintentionally) within a cave, thereby putting themselves or others in danger; poor leadership within a cave by leaders or seconders; disregard of cave conservation; unsafe organisation of a club activity (including a day trip or weekend trip); inappropriate social conduct or disregard for the wellbeing of others within a club activity.

Complaints can be made in person (to an individual within the committee or to the entire committee) or via the club's email address (leedsunicaving@gmail.com). If a member wants to make their complaint confidential then they should make this explicit. However, if a committee member does not know how to deal with the complaint themselves, then they may have to consult with other committee members, more experienced members of the club or the LUU.

Disciplinary actions in regard to caving trips may include: explaining to a member how they broke a guideline and why this guideline is important; requiring a member to carry out further training to demonstrate they can cave or lead others safely; and in exceptional circumstances suspending or banning a member from caving with the club. Any disciplinary action may be appealed by discussion with the committee.

In the case of more complicated complaints or disciplinary procedures, the LUU may get involved with disciplinary action or the appeal process.

Statement of Acceptance

Document approved for publication by LUUCaS committee

President: Michael Brigham	Signed: 	Date: 13 Sep 2019
Secretary: Rosi Elliott	Signed: 	Date: 13 Sep 2019
Treasurer: David Newcombe	Signed: 	Date: 13 Sep 2019