

Code of Practice

1. Introduction

Being totally committed to the safety of its members, Oxford University Walking Club (OU Walking Club, OUWC, the Club) will operate, so far as is reasonably practicable, in accordance with its Risk Assessment, the Proctors' rules, and the current guidelines of the national governing body for hill-walking, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC).

The Club affiliated to the BMC in Michaelmas Term 2008, and continues to abide by the following conditions which pre-date that decision: (i) the Trip and Safety Coordinator ensures that the Club is kept up-to-date with current and relevant issues of the BMC through its literature, (ii) the Club abides by BMC policy and guidelines at all times, and (iii) the Trip Leader Safety Document is incorporated into the Code of Practice (see section 9).

At least three representatives of the committee shall attend safety briefings with the Sports Federation Manager, as required.

The Code of Practice may be reviewed on a termly basis but shall be reviewed on an annual basis at the beginning of Michaelmas Term, and the new Code of Practice shall be signed by the committee before being forwarded to the Sports Federation Manager. Copies of the Code of Practice shall be available, on request, from the Trip and Safety Coordinator.

The Risk Assessment is reviewed on an annual basis then forwarded to the Sports Federation Manager. Copies of the Risk Assessment shall be available, on request, from the Trip and Safety Coordinator.

Each member of the committee must sign the declaration which states: "As a club official I am aware of my moral and legal obligations to my fellow Club Members, I have read and understand, agree to abide by, and enforce the rules of the Club Constitution, Code of Practice, Risk Assessment and Terms of Reference of the Office to which I hold." The declarations are kept by the Secretary.

It is the responsibility of individual Club members to bring to the attention of the Committee and relevant Trip Organiser and Leaders any medical condition or previous injuries that may affect their or other Club members' safe participation in Club Trips. Such information will be treated as confidential. If the issue is of a sensitive nature, then this can be raised with the Sports Federation Manager.

2. Club Activities

The Club's activities are centred around Club Trips (Weekend Trips and Minibus Day-trips), Local Walks and Social Events.

Club Trips are defined in the Trip Leader Safety Document (see section 9). Weekend Trips involve a group of Club members going walking for more than one day, travelling by minibus, typically in Britain's National Parks, such as the Lake District, Dartmoor or Pembrokeshire. Minibus Day-trips involve a group of Club members going walking for one day, travelling by minibus, typically to Britain's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, such as Dorset, the Gower Peninsula or the Quantock Hills. A number of Weekend Trips and Minibus Day-trips are organised for every Full Term, and occasionally during vacations. Participants are required to sign up in advance and the level of walking is made clear to the

participants prior to signing up. The walking is always adapted to fit in with every participant's walking ability so no prior level of experience is required.

Local Walks are organised every weekend (or as practicable) during Full Term, and occasionally during vacations. Local Walks only involve Category 1 terrain, as defined in section 9. Members and non-members alike are welcome to turn up at a stated time and place and a keen volunteer, the Walks Leader, will guide the group around a route in the local countryside. If the Local Walk does not start and finish in Oxford, for example a walk in the Cotswolds or Chilterns, then public transport is used. The walking is generally less challenging than that experienced on Club Trips, so in Trinity term 2002 the Area Safety Officer for Sport agreed that it is not necessary to extend the regulations in the Trip Leader Safety Document (see section 9) to Walks Leaders, as it is considered to be reasonable that keen volunteers can lead Local Walks in a safe manner.

Social Events are generally held in Oxford and are organised by the Club's Social Representative, mostly during Full Term and occasionally during vacations. The Club also has three annual Social Events: a ceilidh, a formal dinner and a punt party.

Participation Statement: Oxford University Walking Club recognises that walking, and hillwalking in particular, is an activity, which carries with it a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

3. Trip Organisers and Leaders

Trip Organisers and Leaders and their duties are defined in the Trip Leader Safety Document (see section 9), but some points are clarified in this section.

Trip Leaders are responsible for the safety and discipline of participants on Club Trips, must try to ensure that this Code of Practice is adhered to by participants, and must try to ensure that participants comply with the Country Code.

Trip Leaders must carry appropriate safety equipment on walks, including a first aid kit and a survival bag or shelter, and must try to ensure that recognised good practice is followed at all times.

Trip Leaders must try to ensure that every participant has adequate equipment (see section 4) and have the right to refuse participation in the walks to anyone who they feel does not have the necessary equipment, which was stated on the Equipment List.

Trip Leaders are expected to lead routes that can be adapted depending on the weather conditions experienced on the day. When the group is in a remote location, escape routes to return to civilisation quickly should be planned as options in the case of an emergency.

The Trip Organiser must complete a Trip Registration Form before every Club Trip and ensure that it reaches the Sports Federation by the appropriate deadline, as detailed in section 10 and 11 of the Sports Federation safety webpage: <http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/sports-federation/safety> .

The Trip Organiser must complete a Trip Report Form after every Club Trip, and ensure that it reaches the Trip and Safety Coordinator within one week.

The Trip Organiser must ensure that every participant has access to a copy of the Equipment List, and has signed the participation statement with contact details of the next-of-kin (or chosen alternative) for reference in case of an emergency.

The Trip Leaders are responsible for following the Club's accident procedure and must inform the Sports Federation Manager within 24 hours, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, in the event of an accident or near-miss (see section 5).

4. Equipment

The Club expects all participants of Club Trips and Local Walks to provide or arrange to borrow the necessary equipment. The participants of Club Trips are provided with a detailed Equipment List of what they are expected to have. It is stressed that some items, such as well worn-in, waterproof walking boots, sufficiently warm clothing, and a waterproof jacket are absolutely essential and that, at the Trip Leaders' discretion, members will not be able to participate in the walks without these items. It is recognised that the quality of the equipment that the participants have for Local Walks is less critical, because the group will never be particularly remote, yet waterproof walking boots and waterproofs are strongly encouraged.

The Club's equipment is stored at the University Sports Centre on Iffley Road. The store is administered by the Quartermaster, who shall supply members with a list of equipment, on request.

The Quartermaster is responsible for keeping the equipment inventory up to date; it should be reviewed at least annually. A copy should be forwarded to the Sports Federation Manager. The Quartermaster is also responsible for keeping the logs of technical equipment (i.e. equipment marked as technical in the equipment inventory) including when they were purchased, any use, any inspections made and a retirement date.

Club members are entitled to borrow the Club's equipment for use in either Club Trips or private trips, with the equipment's use on Club Trips taking priority over private trips. For private trips, the Club member must sign a Loan Agreement and supply a returnable deposit cheque covering the cost of replacing the equipment in the event that it is not returned or is damaged beyond acceptable wear-and-tear. The borrower is responsible for reporting any damage to, or faults with, the equipment, as well as any use of consumables (e.g. the contents of first aid kits). He/she must record any use of technical equipment in the appropriate log book.

5. Accident Procedures

Any major accident or near miss (an accident that could have resulted in a serious injury or death) will be reported to the Sports Federation Manager, as detailed in sections 7 and 8 of the Sports Federation safety webpage: <http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/sports-federation/safety>. This procedure will be done within 24 hours, or as soon as is reasonably practicable. Near miss reports are recognised as especially important, because they can be useful in the identification of procedures or practices that were either insufficient or not followed correctly, in which case equipment or training requirements can be reviewed in a bid to ensure that a similar event in the future does not lead to a major accident.

6. Training

Safety on walks is an absolute priority for Oxford University Walking Club, which has several measures in place to ensure that the safety and interests of both its members and other people is the highest priority in all its activities. The Trip and Safety Coordinator keeps the Trip Leader Safety Document and Risk Assessment up-to-date to incorporate the latest thinking in safety issues, and puts measures in place to ensure that the guidelines in the two documents are followed.

The Club actively pursues a leader training program for its Trip Leaders as outlined in Section 9. The Club endeavours to follow the Sports Federation guidelines for the provision of training its Trip Leaders, as detailed in section 13 of the Sports Federation safety webpage: <http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/sports-federation/safety> .

The Club actively pursues a First Aid training program for its Trip Leaders. 16-hour outdoors-orientated First Aid courses are organised and subsidised by the Club for its Trip Leaders to gain tuition in First Aid skills. The Club endeavours to follow the Sports Federation guidelines for First Aid training, as detailed in section 12 of the Sports Federation safety webpage: <http://www.sport.ox.ac.uk/sports-federation/safety> .

7. Complaint Procedure

If you feel that there are issues which need discussion, such as safety issues relating to the Club's activities, the standard of leadership, the standard of the Club's equipment or the Club's administration, then please get in touch with the Trip and Safety Coordinator or the President, as appropriate. For issues relating to a particular Club Trip, then in the first resort please get in touch with the Trip Organiser or Leaders.

If you have complaints to which you don't get a satisfactory response from the President, Trip and Safety Coordinator, Trip Organiser, or Trip Leaders, then you can contact the Secretary of the Sports Federation instead and a reply will be received within 10 days. Failing that, you should contact the Director of Sport or the Sports Federation Manager.

8. BMC recommendations

Oxford University Walking Club will operate, so far as is reasonably practicable, in accordance with current guidelines and recommendations from the BMC.

9. Trip Leader Safety Document

[The Trip Leader Safety Document (TLSD) is incorporated in to the Code of Practice here – see separate document for the TLSD.]