

Newcastle University Mountaineering Club Safety Policy



1. Definitions:

- 1.1. NUMC: Newcastle University Mountaineering Club.
- 1.2. BMC: British Mountaineering Council.
- 1.3. MCoFS: Mountaineering Council of Scotland.
- 1.4. UIAA: Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme (International Climbing and Mountaineering Organisation).
- 1.5. Committee: Democratically elected committee of NUMC.

2. National Governing Body Affiliation

- 2.1. NUMC is affiliated to the British Mountaineering Council.
- 2.2. Through this affiliation the club and its members are covered by the BMC insurance policy.

3. Statement of Intent

- 3.1. The aim of NUMC is promote enjoyment of the mountains and to provide an opportunity for people to try the sport in a relatively safe atmosphere.
- 3.2. It should be noted that this policy does not equate to experience or proper instruction and should not be treated as a substitute for either.
- 3.3. Reading, understanding and adhering to this policy is ultimately an individual's own responsibility.
- 3.4. The club reserves the right, in agreement with the Athletic Union, to refute member's membership to the club (with no guarantee of membership cost refund) if they are to flout and repeatedly ignore advice given in the Safety Policy.
- 3.5. An insurance requirement states that ONLY Newcastle University Students Union members will be members of NUMC. A breach of insurance guidelines is unacceptable and should be avoided at all costs.

4. Codes of Practice

- 4.1. NUMC recognises, endorses and requires that all members accept the BMC Participation Statement: "The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with 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."
- 4.2. Always consider how your actions may affect others "A duty of care is owed to persons who are so closely and directly affected by an individual's act that they ought reasonably to have had them in contemplation as being affected when direction their minds to acts or omissions that are called in question."
- 4.3. Always consider how your actions may place yourself and others at risk. You have a duty of care to others to avoid endangering or threatening situations.
- 4.4. Committees and individuals should be objective, honest and realistic about their own level of experience.
- 4.5. You have a responsibility to question procedures that you believe to be dangerous.

5. 'Leaders' within the Club

- 5.1. The Club should be aware that using terms such as 'instructor', 'leader', and similar words ('leadership', 'led', etc.) as these can have ambiguous meanings, and consequently misunderstandings can occur when individuals have different ideas about the level and nature of what is being provided.
- 5.2. All members should be assumed to be novices until proven otherwise.
- 5.3. Experienced members within the club may be deemed competent by the committee. The Club does not demand any formal qualifications from individuals, such that no club member can be 'led' but rather guided by a more experienced climber. As a guide line it is advised that to be deemed an experienced climber, one should be able to competently complete all activities and techniques as described in the syllabus for the Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI) award.

- 5.4. It must be stressed that all activities undertaken by the club are run by students for students with no assumption that qualified leadership will be provided. Any activity should be undertaken in the spirit of imparting accumulated knowledge (peer to peer) rather than in a formal teaching/learning environment.
- 5.5. Meets which include some form of training should concentrate on the sharing of knowledge and skills, but not as 'instruction'.
- 5.6. Members of a club who have one or other UIAA accredited qualifications may, of course, assist fellow-members in their club activities. However, they should not:
 - 5.6.1. Be regarded by the Club or members of the club as "leaders" of particular meets or activities.
 - 5.6.2. Be regarded by the Club as the only persons suitable to take out beginners or minors.
 - 5.6.3. Be paid by the Club to act as a leader.

6. Health requirements for members

- 6.1. The club should be made aware of any medical conditions that club members have which might affect the safety of that individual and those around them.
- 6.2. The committee holds discretion to judge club members unfit to climb and refuse them on trips, if it is felt that injury or ill-health will lead to endangerment of that person or those around them.
- 6.3. Medical conditions must be stated on trip forms with the next of kin/emergency contact details.

7. First Aid

- 7.1. It is advisable that a qualified first-aider is present on all trips.
- 7.2. A suitable first aid kit should be carried by all climbing party's (consisting of a leader and one or more seconds) on all trips. The club will provide first aid kits should a group not have one.
- 7.3. The club will maintain suitable first aid kits. The first aid kits will be taken on all club meets and provided to groups that need one.
- 7.4. The club strongly encourages the carrying of personal first aid kits and is mandatory on all Scottish winter trips. It is to be enforced that each climbing team has at least one first aid kit.
- 7.5. The club aims to provide an annual first aid awareness evening for its members.

8. Equipment

- 8.1. Having the right gear is not the same as having the skill and experience to use it properly. "All gear, no idea."
- 8.2. Climbing equipment is highly specialised and should only be used for its intended purpose. Similarly, only equipment designed for climbing and mountaineering should be used for said activities.
- 8.3. Remember that the safe life span for textile items depends on the amount of use. Adhere to manufactures guidelines on treatment, care and, disposal of equipment.
- 8.4. Full audits of all club kit should be done by the gear secretary each semester, following BMC guidelines. Full records must be made of the life and usage of equipment in the NUMC "Gear Log".
- 8.5. Members who borrow the equipment have a responsibility to check it before use, to use it in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and to report any damage or misuse. This is not the responsibility of the club's Gear Secretary.
- 8.6. Club equipment should be signed in and out of stores under the knowledge of the committee, and by club members only. For insurance purposes, kit should be returned promptly and in a satisfactory state (see section 13).
- 8.7. Failure to return club equipment may result in the cost of replacing the item(s) being charged to the member in question, at the discretion of the committee.
- 8.8. Ultimately you have a responsibility to check yours and your partner's gear before use.

9. Use of Crag

"If you are the leader or organiser or group of climbers...you have an over-riding responsibility to the sport and to the tradition of climbing. The natural crag these days is sensitive, fragile, and often over-crowded environment". Iain Peter, CEO National Centre, Plas y Brenin

- 9.1. Members should observe mandatory climbing bans (E.g. Bird restrictions) at all times. (The BMC publishes seasonal restriction lists.)
- 9.2. Be aware that many crags nowadays are covered by access agreements. Do not do anything to jeopardise this; remember that inclusion of routes or a crag in a guidebook does not necessarily give rights to free access.
- 9.3. Remember that inconsiderate parking can trigger access problem. "considerate parking is especially important if you have a large vehicle or groups."
- 9.4. Be aware of erosion at the crag, especially in the midst of summer at popular crags. Give thought to approach paths and where the belay is set up. Adopt a minimum impact approach.
- 9.5. Be aware of potential dangers at the crag. E.g. falling rocks, wet grass and loose scree. Climbing helmets must be worn at all times when around the crag, when climbing and belaying.
- 9.6. Escape routes and safe descents should be planned in advance of starting a route and made known to the climbing team.
- 9.7. Never climb directly below another climber.
- 9.8. Never throw anything from the top of a crag. Accidentally dropped/dislodged objects should be accompanied with the call of "BELOW".

10. Safety Precautions

- 10.1. Novices must be made aware of the potential dangers involved in climbing and mountaineering. A copy of the full risk assessment must be made accessible to all members at all times.
- 10.2. Members should be aware that when climbing with a less experienced climber, you automatically put yourself in a position of primary responsibility.
- 10.3. Always err on the side of safety. Experience is no reason to relax safety precautions.
- 10.4. Use pre-agreed climbing calls to avoid confusion. (Take in, that's me, slack!... Etc).
- 10.5. Harness should be tied in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines; usually doubled back buckles, the rope threaded through the leg loops and waistband.
- 10.6. Always tie in using a re-threaded figure-of-eight with a stopper knot or other suitable method. Always use the buddy system to check climbing partners have tied in and secured their harness properly.
- 10.7. When participating with bouldering care must be taken to descend the wall in a safe and controlled manner at all times. A sensible judgement regarding the surrounding area the state of rock must be made, including the route and its descent, prior to climbing.

11. Belays and belaying

- 11.1. Maintain no less than two independent belay points when setting up a belay. Never loiter near the top of a crag if not belaying.
- 11.2. Belays should be set up as to avoid shock loading if one point should fail.
- 11.3. Use a belay device when belaying, maintain hand contact with the dead end of the rope at all times.
- 11.4. When belaying from below, stand up.
- 11.5. When belaying from above, position yourself as to maximise communication with your partner and ideally within eye sight. Always place yourself in the position you would be pulled in under load, thus reducing the effect of shock loading.
- 11.6. Erosion - remember running ropes over edges can seriously damage the rope and the rock. Consider using padding (i.e. rope protectors) or extending the anchor with slings if top roping.
- 11.7. Abseiling should not be used except in emergency situations or when no alternative exit is available. Abseils should be backed up with a safety brake e.g. prussic loop.

12. Trips

12.1. Summer Meets

- 12.1.1. A summer meet incorporates any meet where by winter or mixed climbing will not be undertaken. Members are expected to adopt the following precautions and practices:

- 12.1.2. All members on club meets must sign to say they have read and understand this safety policy prior to attending the trip.
 - 12.1.3. All members on club meets must provide emergency contact details and relevant medical information to the trip leader, president or secretary.
 - 12.1.4. An accurate and detailed weather forecast for the area including temperature, wind speed and direction, precipitation and outlook must be obtained and be as up to date as feasible.
 - 12.1.5. Members on the trip should be aware of information given in the forecast and its relevance and possible impact on the planned group activity.
 - 12.1.6. The approach route to the crag will be planned in advance with the aid of a crag guide-book description or map.
 - 12.1.7. The trip organiser has the right to deem a climb unsuitable for a pair of experienced climbers. In this case they will not be allowed to undertake the climb during the trip.
 - 12.1.8. An experienced club member may be accompanied by a maximum of six novice members when walking, and two when climbing.
 - 12.1.9. Solo climbing on serious routes without a rope is banned on club trips. However solo climbing on routes of a non-serious nature well below the limit of the climber is allowed (ie. Scrambling routes).
 - 12.1.10. The club exclusively uses minibuses supplied by the athletic union. Drivers of buses are vetted by the athletic union, hence are deemed competent. Drivers will strictly adhere to the minibus guidelines as set out by the Union Society/AU.
 - 12.1.11. Drivers should act responsibly, adhere to the Highway Code, take regular breaks and be well rested.
 - 12.1.12. Committee members have the right to stop a driver driving with immediate effect if their actions are deemed to be unsafe or irresponsible.
 - 12.1.13. All trips must be registered with the AU using the appropriate trip list form. A list of all members attending a trip must be supplied to the AU safety officer before the trip departs.
 - 12.1.14. All leaders must report their location (e.g. climb, section of the crag etc.) to the trip organiser each time they relocate. This information should be recorded in a log book. Committee members shall ensure that two experienced people remain sober, one of which should be an AU approved driver, until all groups are off the hill.
 - 12.1.15. Every member should be suitably equipped when participating in outdoor activities. A suggested minimum kit list follows:
 - Spare warm clothing
 - Hat and gloves
 - Adequate waterproof clothing
 - Emergency food
 - Personal First Aid kit
 - Torch
 - Whistle
 - Large polythene bivi bag
 - Compass and appropriate map
 - 12.1.16. It is the ultimate responsibility of the individual to ensure that they have the required equipment (climbing specific and general outdoor) and the knowledge of how to use it.
- 12.2. Winter Meets
- 12.2.1. A winter meet incorporates any meet where by winter or mixed climbing is undertaken. In addition to 14.1, the following precautions must be adopted:
 - 12.2.2. All members of a party should consider carrying ice axes, crampons and appropriate footwear, combined with the accompanying knowledge of how to use them.

12.2.3. The club will aim to run winter skills and mountain safety courses by certified guides in order to develop the skills of novice Scottish winter climbers and mountaineers.

12.2.4. In addition to skills required for summer trips, it is recommended that experienced winter climbers should be familiar with and able to competently complete activities and techniques described in the Winter Mountain Leader qualification syllabus.

13. Emergency Planning

13.1.1. The group will be made aware of persons carrying mobile phones and contact details provided.

13.1.2. Those present should know the identity of any competent first-aider on the trip and any others with experience.

13.1.3. On the event of an accident the situation should be assessed and the necessary course of action be determined.

13.1.4. A course of action may include contacting the emergency services. Due to the nature of club activities the most likely required emergency service will be mountain rescue. To request mountain rescue dial 999/112 and ask for police, then give your location and request mountain rescue. You should be prepared to give the coordinates of the casualty, or if not know at least an approximate location, as well as their condition. If a mobile phone was used to make the call ensure it remains switched on following the initial call.

13.1.5. The club president, secretary or nominated delegatee will perform the principal contact role in case of accident or emergency.

Club President: Oliver Grady
61 Seventh Avenue
Heaton
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE6 5YD
07772 035669
o.l.grady1@newcastle.ac.uk

Club Secretary: Catherine Bonn
Apartment 1
25-29 City Road
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 2AF
07892 683410
c.bonn2@newcastle.ac.uk

14. Reporting

14.1. Personal Accidents

14.1.1. Accidents are to be reported to the president or secretary, who will then inform the AU officer if appropriate.

14.1.2. Accidents will be reported in accordance with AU guidelines available on the AU website.

14.2. Damage to pooled equipment

14.2.1. Damage that may have occurred to the club equipment must be reported to the gear secretary.

14.2.2. Damaged equipment must not be used and must be marked as damaged or discarded.

14.2.3. Damage to all club equipment will be logged in the Gear Log Book

15. Training sessions

15.1. Club members must adhere to the rules and regulations of the climbing wall and accept any safety instructions given from qualified wall staff.

15.2. The club trains at Climb Newcastle (alternating between The Pool and The Valley) on Mondays from 7pm and Newcastle Climbing Centre on Wednesdays from 6pm. The present address and contact details are:

Climb Newcastle (The Pool)
Shipleigh Place
Byker
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE6 2DQ

Climb Newcastle (The Valley)
Quality Row
Byker
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE6 5YD

Newcastle Climbing Centre
285 Shields Road
Byker
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE6 2UQ

- 15.3. Respect and due care for others should be considered at all times, regardless of the presence of club members or the general public.
- 15.4. It is the members responsibility to adopt a safe means of travel to and from the climbing venue.
- 15.5. All club members can "Mentor" under BMC insurance
- 15.6. The terms "teach" and "coach" are to be avoided when describing club activities as they imply a level of certification on the count of the instructor which will not be consistent between all members.

16. Further Reading

- 16.1. More information may be found on the themes raised in the safety policy from a variety of sources.
A subset of these include:
- 16.2. NUMC Constitution: (available in introductory material and on request from the Current President)
- 16.3. NUMC Risk Assessment: (available in introductory material and on request from the Current President)
- 16.4. BMC Website: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/>
- 16.5. MCofS Advice for Clubs: <https://www.mountaineering.scot/clubs/advice-and-resources>
- 16.6. UIAA website: <http://www.theuiaa.org/>
- 16.7. Rock Climbing Instructor Award (RCI): <http://www.mountain-training.org/climbing/awards/rock-climbing-instructor>
- 16.8. Winter Mountain Leader qualification: <http://www.mountain-training.org/walking/skills-and-awards/winter-mountain-leader>

However, with all the above in mind, it is not the intention of the club to stifle the spirit of adventure or to inhibit personal ambition and endeavour and as such all those who agree to be bound by this document ultimately agree to take responsibility for themselves, their actions and their wellbeing.

The club recognises that alumni climbers have a large amount of experience and are an invaluable asset to the club and its members and as such, at times, existing club members may come in to contact with alumni climbers. At these times club members and alumni alike should consider the points raised in this document and agree to be bound by them. Particular attention should be paid to section 2 (responsibility) of the document. Alumni climbers may be registered as coaches at the discretion of the committee, enabling them to climb with club members on trip, provided equivalent and valid BMC insurance is held by the alumni. Under no circumstances are alumni climbers permitted to travel in transport obtained through the AU and driven by club members as this will invalidate the vehicle insurance.

Written by TS - September 2005

Amended by DW - September 2006

Second Amendment by CP – September 2007

Third Amendment by MD - September 2008

Fourth Amendment by NS – September 2009

Fifth Amendment by WH - September 2011

Sixth Amendment by WH - September 2012

Seventh amendment by SL - September 2013

Eighth amendment by GA - March 2016

Ninth amendment by DP – June 2016

Tenth amendment by OG – June 2017

Eleventh amendment by OG – April 2018