

Exeter University Canoe Club – Standard Operating Procedures

Exeter University Canoe Club is an active and friendly Athletic Union society that gives new and inexperienced paddlers the opportunity to learn to kayak, and provides competent paddlers with the opportunity to enhance and develop their own skills. As Kayaking can become a risky sport if not run responsibly, the club has a clear procedure for all paddlers to follow to ensure that the foreseeable risks involved with this sport are minimised to the best of our ability.

About EUCC

Exeter University Canoe Club's ordinary schedule is as follows:

- Monday. Pool Session held at St Lukes pool. General skills are taught, learnt and practiced, and games are played. A shuttle bus is run from the main library entrance at 7.45pm.
- Tuesday. Kayak Fitness sessions are sometimes held on Tuesday evenings at the Streatham Court Sports Centre. These are primarily held during the second and third terms.
- Wednesday. Pool Session held at St Lukes pool. General skills are taught, learnt and practiced, and games are played. This session is sometimes used later in the year to focus on polo skills. A shuttle bus is run from the main library entrance at 7.45pm.
- Thursday. Canoe Club social often involving dressing up and games.
- Saturday. River trip to a local river, or if there is insufficient water then kayak surfing.
- Sunday. River trips, or sometimes 'Safety Sunday' days are held where competent paddlers share tips and knowledge about being safety and keeping the beginners as safe as possible.

The club can be contacted through the website (www.eucc.org.uk), e-mail (info@eucc.org.uk) or by turning up at one of the events detailed above. Committee members also have their own email addresses; position@eucc.org.uk. The position names are captain, secretary, social, treasurer, trips, training, transport, equipment, and competitions.

Club Responsibilities

Equipment

With respect to equipment the club will provide each club member, if required, with equipment conforming to British Canoe Union guidelines(?). This equipment shall be as follows:

- A buoyancy aid of correct size and capacity for the paddler
- A helmet that fits securely with adequate fastening
- A spray deck of sufficient size and fit for the boat being paddled.
- A kayak of suitable shape, model and maintenance. The kayak shall be suitable not only for the river grade being paddled, but also the club member
- Correct-Handed Paddles

Sufficient safety equipment will also be provided as follows:

- First Aid Kit (fully stocked)
- Spare Paddles
- Throw lines of suitable length and number for the activity. Throw lines are carried by the safety and only by people who carry and know how to use river knives.

The equipment shall be stored in the Cave. Equipment is monitored and maintained by the Equipment Secretary, who will keep records of the maintenance carried out. If equipment is unsafe or damaged it will be clearly labelled to prevent accidental use. The equipment is formally inspected on an annual basis and an inventory is kept, detailing the age, condition and value of every piece of equipment.

NOTE - Any personal equipment that is used is the owner's responsibility and the owner should ensure that it conforms to the necessary standards for the activity being undertaken. The Primary Safety may however prevent an item of equipment being used if they feel that is unsuitable for the activity being undertaken. The club assumes no responsibility for any personal equipment used.

Transport

The club owns a nine seater mini-bus with space for around twelve kayaks and other equipment. It is

the Logistics Officer's responsibility to ensure that the bus is always taxed, insured, and within its M.O.T. If the bus breaks down or needs repairing, the repairs will be carried out by a local garage as soon as possible to cause minimum disruption to the normal running of the club.

The bus will be driven by committee members who have owned a full UK driving license for over a year and have at least a full years driving experience. The bus can also be driver by non-committee members as long as they meet the conditions above and have specific agreement from the Logistics Officer and the Captain. They will have informed the Athletic Union that they are one of the drivers so that they are covered by the insurance. It is the drivers' responsibility to prompt passengers to wear their seatbelts, and must check that any boats on the roof are securely tied.

The bus can also be used by registered drivers for non-club trips, but only under special circumstances and by approval of the Logistics Officer and the Captain. The bus is not to be hired out to other parties, even if they can sort out their own insurance and drivers.

When tying boats onto the roof, paddlers must ensure they only put weight on the roof rack bars and not on the roof of the bus itself. All straps must be end-looped and correctly tied off. **As per the law** the driver must check this before **every journey, including different legs of the same journey.**

Any faults with the bus should be reported back to the Logistics Officer promptly.

Personal Responsibilities

Whilst the club aims to cover the majority of safety aspects for the members, responsibility for personal behaviour ultimately rests with individual club members. These responsibilities are:

- Read and understand the club's Operating Procedures, which are to be freely available on the website.
- Declare on the membership form any medical conditions or allergies
- Be able to swim at least 50 metres in light clothing
- Always pay attention to and adhere to the advice and instructions of the club member leading the activity
- Inform the trip/group leader of any medical conditions or injuries that could prove problematic during the course of the activity
- Always carry an inhaler or other personal medication that may be required that is not kept in the first aid kit
- Not jeopardise the safety of others during club activities
- NOTE: The decision to paddle always rests ultimately with the individual

On trips the club member shall:

- Have attended a minimum of one pool session
- Ensure that they wear a correctly fitting buoyancy aid and helmet as provided by the club where required
- Alert the Trip Leader to any possible problems with their equipment
- Always follow the instructions of the trip/group leaders
- Inform the trip/group leader if they have any doubts about their ability/desire to participate further in the club activity
- Raise and discuss any safety concerns
- Only get on the water when and where instructed to do so

Normal Operating Procedures

Club Safety Definitions and Guidelines

The ratio of beginners relative to experienced paddlers on the river is up to the discretion of the Trip Leader on the day, but will be in accordance with the maximum group sizes detailed below. Only in very easy conditions or under special circumstances should these maximum group sizes be exceeded.

- On white water, for every Primary Safety, three beginners are allowed. For every Secondary Safety, two beginners are allowed.

- On flat water, for every Primary Safety, eight beginners are allowed. For every Secondary Safety, four beginners are allowed.

The people who can be Primary Safety and Secondary Safety will vary depending on the level of water being paddled.

- Primary Safety are paddlers who have attended the higher White Water Safety course or equivalent. They will all carry a river knife and throw bag, and are more than capable of leading confidently down the level of water being paddled. They will be trained to use the first aid kit, and will have experience of paddling the river.
- Secondary Safety are paddlers who have attended a basic safety course, and may carry some safety equipment. They are capable of confidently paddling the river and assisting in simple rescues.

These guidelines are down to the discretion of the Trip and Training Secretaries.

If the river has never been paddled before, or there is sufficient evidence that conditions could have changed, a team of competent paddlers ought to be sent down first as 'Team Probe' to check the suitability and scout for dangerous features.

Pool Sessions

The club committee will arrange for the Club Bus to run shuttle services to the pool approximately 15 minutes before it begins, and drop members home after. There will not be a shuttle service if the bus is out of action.

If a paddler is new, he/she will be required to undertake a swim test and capsize drill. The swim test will involve swimming 50m and treading water for 3 minutes. The capsize drill will cover calling for a rescue and the correct procedure to exit a boat when wearing a spray deck. It will cover the importance of the release loop on the spray deck. The paddler will not be permitted to use a spray deck until they have completed a capsize drill. Paddlers are only allowed to enter the water when there is another paddler or lifeguard on the side.

The Training Secretary will organise the training in the pool. The Club Committee has a responsibility to ensure all equipment has been returned to its storage and that all members **have left the facility by 10pm. (maybe "have left the poolside by 10pm.)**

River Trips

A sign-up list for official river trips will be posted on the club forum at least two days before the trip, and should be announced at a pool session during the week. Should there be limited space on the trip, places are allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis, but the final decision is at the Trip Secretaries discretion to ensure the group is appropriate for the difficulty of the trip. If a member of Primary Safety does not think a paddler has sufficient skill for the trip, he/she can be refused from attending. If a member has a car and can provide extra transport for the trip, then they are guaranteed a place (but not guaranteed to paddle).

The Trip Secretary will identify the Primary and Secondary safety for the trip in compliance with club safety rules (detailed above). There will be a minimum of three people on any club trip. They will organise groups and river leaders, and allocate safety equipment accordingly. If the conditions of the river are harder than expected, the club has the right to prevent any paddler from paddling, should they be deemed not capable. The club will not take paddlers of unsuitable experience or ability on trips above their level.

Should a few members wish to go on an informal trip (E.g. to the Quay) during some free time, they must first ask permission from the Trip Secretary or Captain. The Trip Secretary or Captain will agree the trip only if the number of competent paddlers on the trip meets club safety rules. They are allowed to borrow any suitable equipment and boats owned by the club, and are allowed to use the bus if it is available and they have an insured driver.

Before beginning the river, the club will make sure all paddlers are wearing suitable and correct equipment and have a warm change of clothes. There will be a briefing given by the Trip Leader or Group Leaders, and all members will do a warm up. River signals will be recapped. Dry kit will be

organised into the bus and arrangements made for the bus to be at, or accessible from, the get out.

During paddling the river, the trip/group leaders will be continuously assessing the risks around the river and should there be a feature too risky for some members of the group to paddle, appropriate action will be taken to reduce the risk. This may include descending in smaller groups, or portaging the feature.

During all stages of the descent, paddlers will follow proper paddling etiquette and should there be any problems, the Emergency Operating Procedure (detailed herein) will be followed.

Surfing

The same procedure applies to surfing trips as to river trips, but with the following differences.

The Trip Secretary is responsible for checking the tide times, swell and period to ensure that the conditions are suitable.

The club strongly recommends that all paddlers wear helmets and a buoyancy aid, but it is recognised that some experienced paddlers will not want to wear these. The club does not accept responsibility regarding incidents which could have been avoided by wearing a helmet or buoyancy aid. All paddlers will have been briefed in surf etiquette before entering the water.

If the group is large and generally inexperienced, and the beach has no lifeguard, at least one person will remain on land to watch for unseen dangers, regularly count the paddlers to check that none have drifted too far out or along, and help those who swim empty their boats.

Emergency Operating Procedure

In the event of an incident or emergency the following procedure shall be adhered to:

Safety

Safety should follow training given in their course to the best of their ability given the situation. However, they have no responsibility to attempt rescues if it puts themselves or the group at risk. The safety paddlers are volunteers. They must always put their own safety and the safety of the group first and are never required to carry out a rescue if they do not feel safe or confident enough to. All club members have the right to refuse to act as safety, to lead on rivers, or to carry rescue equipment should they wish not to. This should be an informed decision, as in some situations this may prevent others from being able to paddle.

Everyone

The club has a responsibility to manage the situation professionally and sensitively. Communication restrictions must be imposed to prevent false rumours, and under no circumstances must anyone talk to the media or general public until after consultation with the Athletic Union.

The trip leader (or most highly trained first aider) should take charge, and delegate responsibilities. He/she should ensure that appropriate emergency services are contacted, head counts are taken, communication restrictions are imposed, an incident log is written and the Athletic Union informed. The incident log should include the time and date, nature, names and numbers of casualties and the condition of the casualties.

The club will keep the First Aid kit up to date and fully stocked with an appropriate range of bandages, plasters, ice packs, gloves and tissues. There will also be an advice sheet and a face mask. If the incident takes place in a swimming pool, oxygen may be available.