



University Gliding

The Good Practices Guide

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This guide is based on the 'good practices sheet' prepared in 2009 by Colin Field, Chair of The University of Bath Gliding Club. It has evolved into a guide on best running practices for University gliding clubs by compiling information from clubs across the country with the aim of learning from each other to grow the University gliding community.

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Recruiting

In order to run a successful University Gliding club the first important thing to do is recruiting! Most University Clubs currently have 40-100 members annually featuring a core of 10 to 20 really keen regular pilots and committee members.

Freshers Week

For most University clubs Freshers week is the main time for recruiting new members, this is no different for gliding clubs. Many gliding clubs will run at least one promotional event during Freshers week, this is often at a sports/societies/general freshers fair where there will be many clubs and activities advertising to new students at the same time. The most important ingredient at events like this is the people manning the stand; they will give a first impression of the club and need to get across key points quickly and have information on pricing etc. to hand. It has been noted that although advertising should be enthusiastic members should not to over exaggerate average flight times and should instead aim to promote the whole idea of gliding as time at the airfield, helping out, social activities and learning to fly. Due to the lack of women in gliding it is generally worth trying to have both male and female students manning the stand where possible as this encourages more women into the sport, the same applies for representing other minority groups. Many stands will feature eye-catching banners as well as photos on a background and if possible have a laptop showing videos of gliding in general as well as videos made by students from previous years.

In the environment of a fair grabbing student's attention is key so some clubs will try to bring a glider to the fair, either as a visual prop or to let student get in and try the controls. It has been suggested that if possible a two seater should be used as the idea of flying solo in a single seater can be quite intimidating to a new member, this said, single seaters are often smaller so easier to bring. University clubs with their own gliders & trailers have said that having these in view is particularly effective if university club logos are present on the equipment. Please ensure you give the Students Union plenty of warning if you plan to bring a glider to an event as they are large and logistics regarding trailer storage and rigging prior to the event often require quite a lot of planning. Some students unions may have concerns about having the glider at the event, should you require photos of how this has worked well at other universities or copies of risk assessments please contact the BGA University Gliding Club Liaison Officer (office@gliding.co.uk). Another option for drawing students to the gliding stand is the simulator which can be hired from BGA (please check with the BGA for up to date information on costs and availability). It is worth noting that generally at a fair people will pass by quite quickly and the fair will be quite a noisy environment to try and explain controls etc. so the simulator may be more worthwhile as a separate event during Freshers week.

Website & Advertising

For many clubs their website is the main resource that potential members will be directed to for more information. It is well worth making the information online easy to find/navigate, and for the site to look professional whilst being easy to maintain and update (please bear in mind that the next committee may not have excellent tech skills, the easier it is to use the

more up to date it will be!) Being a visually exciting sport, a very effective way of giving people an idea of what's going on is through videos and photos. Encourage lots of photo and video taking at the club, and put the best of it on the website in 'galleries' for people to explore.

Posting a blog, updates and news of member progress and socials is also a great way to keep people informed without sending huge quantities of emails. Try to ensure that galleries of photos and blogs do not stagnate so that the last post/photo shows up as being several months or years old as this paints the picture of an inactive club, where possible it may be worth not showing post dates for this reason. Another key item to have on a website is contact details, these should be updated as required and make sure that the person listed as the contact is likely to reply, nothing is worse than having questions left unanswered.

Many clubs are also embracing social media for contacting students, mostly Facebook but also other sites. These often serve as advertising as well as an information service for current members. It is also worth considering University specific advertising platforms such as re-freshers events, videos on screens around campus, posters and the University radio station.

Promotions

In order to attract new member, retain current members and encourage progress many clubs run promotions. Here are a few examples:

- Refunding the first winch launch of the first 30 people (Bath)
- Trial flight package ie: include 30 mins flying, 1 aerotow or two winches, transport and a day of membership (Edinburgh, Southampton & UCL)
- Getting your 1st winch launch free and then 10th, 20th etc (Warwick)
- Raffle system for prizes such as a number of free winch launches (Loughborough)

These tend to work very well when advertised to new members; despite the costs to the club it is often worth it for the number of additional members who join. It is worth checking that the host club and the SU is able to offer day membership for trial flights before advertising this.

Host Clubs

University Gliding clubs are almost always hosted by another club, a good relationship with the host club is therefore critical for success. For the most part host clubs are keen to have students involved and get more young people interested in the sport as long as they pitch in and help and behave in a sensible manner.

Working With Your Host Club

It is key to show your host club that all members, even those who have just joined, are able to contribute to the airfield and be safe whilst being on site and are not just taking up space on the flying list. Most clubs agree that the best way to show this is by getting new members briefed on airfield safety on their first session and teaching them the basics of helping on the airfield such as positive checks, wing running or glider retrieves. It is also suggested that at least one experienced member who is a familiar face at the club should go on each trip (sometimes referred to as a duty pilot), this gives the host club someone they can approach easily with any small issues during the day and this person can also supervise the newer members and give the safety brief.

A common concern of host clubs is students taking up too much of the flying list and limiting the amount of flying that full members get; there are several solutions to this. Firstly, some host clubs have a separate list for students, this may mean that the flying order is taken as one full member, then a student, full member, student etc to ensure fairness. Another option is to limit the number of students on the airfield at any one time, this number should be discussed between the University club committee and the host club committee, it may also vary depending on the time of year and hence the length of the flying day. The final option is that the University club will be self-sufficient with their own instructors and sometimes gliders too, this will be discussed in further detail in the Instruction section.

Some clubs do experience issues with their host club, if this occurs it is well worth contacting either the BGA Development Officer or the BGA University Gliding Club Liaison Officer (office@gliding.co.uk) who can advise on issues and sometimes step in to liaise with your host club if needed. Generally any major issues can be avoided through good communication; introduce the new University committee to the host club at the beginning of each year so they have a point of contact, try and have University committee members attending host club meetings to give the University a voice and above all be polite and understanding of any issues even if you don't feel they are your fault/ were unavoidable.

Gliding Instruction

Some host clubs will be willing to provide students full instruction by their duty team; this is an ideal situation as it ensures plenty of instructors. A great way to supplement this is to encourage students who become Silver standard to become a BI to take the pressure off of the host club when there are a lot of ab-initios on a trip. It is worth noting that the BGA has funding available to train junior instructors (£500-£1000 per person). This also has the added benefit of giving new members someone to look up to and provide inspiration for how much progress can be made by students. If at all possible it is worth offering monetary assistance to any student undertaking instructor training. Some University clubs are self-sufficient with

enough of their own instructors to not require those from the host club (or are not allowed to use the host clubs instructors). This can work well as the University club is free to organize everything themselves and are less reliant on their host club than most clubs. The only downside is that if the population of the club changes significantly (ie due to graduating students) it can lead to a severe lack of instructors so it is worth discussing this with the host club so plans are set in place incase this situation arises. Often host clubs are simply not aware of how vulnerable University clubs can be if they have seen them thriving for many years, the bottom line is they generally don't want to lose their University partnership and will be willing to help if needed.

Helping as Ground Crew

As previously mentioned, the best way to get people involved is to give a briefing on their first trip to cover airfield safety but also the basics of helping on the airfield. It is worth ensuring any briefing/ training you plan to give is approved by you host club and provided by an experience club member. Students can easily be taught how to drive retrieve vehicles, handle gliders on the ground, do positive control checks, hook on gliders, run with the wing and do cable retrieve; just ensure not to overload them by teaching all of these things at once! Another point to be made is that the experienced member on site for the day should keep an eye on what newer/ less experienced members are doing to ensure it is done correctly and in a safe manner. Some clubs have experienced members shouting at new pilots for incorrect handling of gliders or vehicles, this is understandable if they are causing immediate damage or danger but can very quickly put people off of helping or even flying at all. If this occurs regularly or if a particular member is a repeat offender it is worth approaching someone on the host club committee (or the BGA if needed) to raise this issue as it can be very detrimental to a new pilots confidence and enthusiasm for the sport.

The idea is for the whole day to seem interesting/exciting to club members so some inventive descriptions of tasks can help such as emphasis what the retrieve vehicles are (many freshers have very little driving experience and are keen to driver Landrovers etc). Try to ensure than no one gets stuck doing the same tasks all day and if possible pair people up to work together on retrieves, this makes everything a bit more social.

Paying for Flying

This varies from club to club. Some University clubs pay the host club and then recover the money for flying from their members; others have members pay the host club directly which removes the University as the middle man. Either can work well, it really depends on what the host club is happy with. If possible it is worth allowing students to pay online or by card as some host clubs only take cash or cheque and many students don't have cheque books.

With regard to cost to members this also varies considerably, from around £30 to over £150 per year for student membership. Despite this variation it is often balanced with the cost of launches and airtime. As an example Bath students pay £30 to join (goes to the SU who pay our host club) £6.68 per winch launch and 29p per min for a two seater, all single seater mins are paid for by an alumni donation which acts as an incentive for students to go solo.

Currently every year a number of institutions offer bursaries to young people to develop their flying skills and the Sailplane and Gliding Magazine periodically advertise these. Many young glider pilots have benefitted from being awarded one of the available bursaries in the past.

Transport

Transport to the airfield continues to be one of the most difficult things for gliding clubs to manage due to distance from the University and lack of access by public transport. For this reason most University clubs provide transport in some manner, often with an online sign up system with each passenger contributing to fuel costs

Students Union Vehicles

Many Students Unions offer SU Vehicles which can be hired out by student clubs such as 8 or 10 people minibuses and standard cars. This system should work very well but unfortunately often proves too expensive for most gliding clubs to hire once a week as prices are around the £50 mark for a day. One solution is to apply for a larger budget to cover transport though this won't always be granted! The other issue with SU Vehicles is that any driver needs training and some SU's will specify that drivers must be over 21 or drive regularly which is not the case for many students.

Private Cars

Often clubs will find that some members own cars and are willing to drive to the club with other members. If clubs get the contact details of these people then transport by private cars can be organized centrally with seats allocated fairly. An email may be sent out early in the week petitioning for car drivers, then with a driver confirmed, places can be advertised as above. It is suggested that people still pay £5 fuel money to the driver as this covers fuel and encourages more people to drive. Some clubs have become very reliant on private cars which is now an issue with the number of students bringing cars to university decreasing. Ideally this should not be the only way to get members to the airfield.

Public Transport

On days where there is no alternative, keen members may travel by train and bus when possible to get to the airfield. This is practical at some clubs but for those in remote locations it can prove costly. It is worth travelling as a group to get discounts such as 4 passengers for price of 2 on trains and some clubs have put old bikes chained up in combination locks near to the club or at a local train station for club members to use them.

Help From Host Clubs

Some clubs find that many members of the host club live around the area of the University or the local train station; in this case it is worth approaching the committee of the host club (or particular individuals) to see if lists for students can be arranged if fuel costs are covered. This can be difficult to set up and depends massively on the individuals involved but can be very effective.

Member Retention

One of the problems many university gliding clubs report is lack of member retention. Clubs seem to find that only around 1 in 50 students will progress from first flight to solo, it is very important to increase this as much as possible since only an increase in 1 in 50 would double the solo rate! Many students seem to be disillusioned by the realities of gliding, as mentioned previously it should be advertised accurately as a day outside in good company where you can learn to fly. That said, even with accurate advertising students can still feel that there is little progress in their flying as they are used to more instant gratification or feel it is not very sociable hence the importance of the points below.

Seeing Progression

Immediately after their first flight it is good practice to offer all students the option to buy a logbook. If they accept, they now have a physical reminder of their first flight, as well as a record of it so that if they return they should be able to start where they left off. This appears to be a good motivator to get students to come back a second or third time. After they have accrued a few flights in the book a club progress card can be issued. This is a record of all the competencies they have achieved, and inspires them to come back again and tick off some more boxes towards solo. Another good way to encourage progress is to assign keen new pilots a mentor to oversee their training and encourage them.

Feeling Part of the Club

Socials are one of the best ways to bring clubs together. Most clubs will run a freshers social at the beginning of the year to welcome new members and then several throughout the year. Socials should suit a variety of people so a combination of meals out, pub crawls, formal dinners, clubbing and occasion specific outings (such as Christmas dinners or fireworks) is normally a good way to make sure there is something to suit everyone. Some clubs have found that their socials don't attract enough members leaving a bit of a flat atmosphere, one way to counteract this is by pairing up with other clubs with random cross over interests eg climbing & walking etc. or to contact another local Uni with a gliding club and do joint socials.

Running a photo competition is one way to get student involved, this could be to get the photo on the website homepage, newsletter or that the best picture will earn the photographer a prize at the end of the year. This has the added benefit generating lots of good pictures for publicity use.

Another way to keep members feeling involved in the club is to send regular emails announcing peoples progress to solo, informing them about interesting websites and available scholarships, socials, and committee arrangements. Just note that it is counterproductive to send out too much or members just feel spammed with e-mails and will stop reading them, try to use good subject headers to make sure all e-mails get read.

Away Trips

The Inter University flying week is designed to allow universities to meet up in the summer for a friendly gliding competition which is usually hosted by the winning club from the previous year. Unlike most gliding competitions the Inter Unis allow everyone to compete; from complete beginners in the progress category to soaring and cross country for the more experienced solo pilots. It serves as an excellent way to get the whole club working together but also a chance to build up links with other university clubs.

The Junior Winter Series is another great way to get members involved in the wider gliding community. Normally it consists of three weekend events each at a different site which is known for good winter flying. As this is part of Junior Gliding, not just university, it is open to anyone age 14-26 (though the upper limit is quite relaxed). There is plenty of socialising as well as the opportunity to fly in different gliders at new airfields regardless of the pilot's ability level. Most of the information regarding the winter series can be found on the Junior gliding Facebook page or the BGA can put you in touch with a junior gliding representative from your area.

On a smaller scale, glider pilots are often interested in aviation in general so trips to airshows and aviation museums can be a good way to bring members together particularly if entry is subsidised by the club and/or transport provided. When running any away trip it is important to make sure any forms the university require are filled out in advance of the trip and that suitable transport can be arranged.

Final Points

Running any university club is challenging yet rewarding, without volunteers the university gliding community simply would not exist. It can be difficult to manage a club, particularly due to the yearly turnover of committee members but please do not be put off; there is plenty of help at hand from the BGA and other university clubs and the experience is very rewarding.

The BGA is keen to encourage the development of University Gliding and the primary points of contact within the organisation are: The BGA Development Officer and University Gliding Club Liaison Officer contactable by e-mail through **office@gliding.co.uk**

Other useful sources of gliding information are:

Sailplane & Gliding Magazine

BGA Website

<https://www.gliding.co.uk>

Junior Gliding Website University Gliding Section

<https://www.gliding.co.uk/juniorgliding>