

GUIDANCE FOR THE SAFE USE AND HIRING OF MINIBUSES

Introduction

This guidance has been compiled so that any club or society wishing to hire a minibus from the Union Society has some of the information they need. For example, driver assessments, insurance and emergencies procedures etc.

The Union Society has its own minibus for clubs and societies to use, or if the minibus is already booked will use a minibus hire company. However, there is not an endless supply of buses so please plan ahead and book your buses well in advance, i.e. at least two weeks notice is required.

Please note that only Officers of AU Clubs and Societies and organizers of Freshers and RAG etc may book minibuses.

BOOKING A MINIBUS

Driver Insurance and Training

Usually to drive a minibus from a hire company you need to be over 25 years of age. The Union Society however, have a special minibus policy which allows us to lower the age limit. To be added to the Union Society Driver Insurance policy you must:

- 1) Be 21 years of age or over.
- 2) Possess a clean driving licence.
- 3) Have been driving for at least 12 months.

Then you must:

- 4) Fill in a Drivers Questionnaire and Registration Form
- 5) Book a Driver Assessment
- 6) Bring with you your licence and photograph for your Union Society Drivers Card. If you hold a new plastic card licence you must bring in the paper attachment with it

Any club or society member who was insured to drive in the previous year, should see a member of activities staff with their present driving licence before they continue to drive in the current year. Licences will now be checked every term.

ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

In the event of an accident, the driver and/or trip leader must make the accident scene as safe as possible, without putting themselves or others at further risk.

- Use hazard warning lights and any other safety devices supplied.
- Do not move injured passengers, unless they are in immediate danger of further injury from other vehicles or from fire or explosion.
- Call the emergency services immediately and provide them with as much information about the incident as possible.
- If the emergency services are called, the driver must stay at the scene until they arrive.
- If the accident is damage only and no one is injured, the driver must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy before continuing the journey. The incident must be reported on return.
- If there is any injury or the names of the people involved are not exchanged the driver must report the accident to the Police as soon as possible.

Emergency Evacuations

In the event of an accident or other incident such as fire, an emergency evacuation should be conducted. The best way to evacuate the vehicle will depend upon the nature of the incident, the passenger group and the type of minibus etc. Therefore, the driver and group leaders will need to exercise their judgment at the scene.

Passengers should exit the vehicle as they would normally, if possible, and move to a safe location as far from the scene as possible. If passengers need assistance to exit the vehicle the group leaders should provide what help is necessary. If it is necessary to use the rear exit, care must be taken against any approaching traffic.

Breakdown Procedures

In the event of a vehicle breakdown:

The driver should move the vehicle off the carriageway (onto the hard shoulder on a motorway) and switch on the hazard warning lights. If this is not possible it should be moved as far away from moving traffic as possible. If a warning triangle is used, it should be placed on the same side of the road at least 45 metres from the minibus. Great care must be taken when placing and retrieving a warning triangle, and they must never be used on motorways.

All passengers should be moved out of the nearside of the vehicle and as far away from it and other traffic as possible. No one should stand between the vehicle and oncoming traffic. On motorways or other busy roads passengers should be taken onto the embankment or grass margin and as far from the traffic as is practicable. All passengers should be kept together in one group.

In some circumstances it may be safer to leave the passengers in the vehicle. For example, if there is no safe waiting area. The driver and group leaders must assess the situation and decide what the best course of action is.

Contact should be made with the police and/or breakdown service, with accurate information given on the vehicle's location. If the breakdown occurs on a motorway it is better to use the roadside telephone as this will enable the police to pinpoint the vehicle's location. The nearest emergency telephone is indicated by arrows and numbers on small marker posts at the edge of the hard shoulder.

Insurance Details

Minibus Drivers - What to do in the event of an accident:

- Do not admit liability
- Do not apologise
- Do not offer any payment
- Insurance details are:
Endsleigh Insurance (Brokers) Ltd,
Hadley House,
Shurdington Road,
Cheltenham, Glos.
GL51 4UE

Policy Number: MBP 10 99 500 054
Quote Reference: 99310MU 32868

In the event of an incident including breakdown, accident, break-in or glass claims etc:

Call the RAC 24hr freephone helpline (0800) 07 24 365 who can also arrange transport to your destination if your vehicle is immobile.

- You are obliged by law to give any person affected by the accident your details or pass on this name and number:
Mark Bennett, Student Activities Manager, 0191 2393977.

Remember! Record all details of the accident

Other Vehicle Involved

* Type of Vehicle	* Registration Number
* Name of Driver	* Address
* Telephone number	* Insurers Details
* Brief Details of Damage	* Their Policy Number

When and Where

* Date	* Time
* Visibility	* Road Conditions
* Weather Conditions	* Speed Limits
* Location/Place	* Did the Police attend?

Witness

* Name	* Address and telephone number
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Student Union Premier Van Policy – Transit Vans only

Endsleigh Insurance – Policy Number 32249898VBR

Norwich Union Clubline

In the event of an accident or breakdown we have a helpline number

Telephone: (0800) 678 999

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Please report all incidents when returning from your journey

THE DRIVER ASSESSMENT, WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This assessment is not a test. You need to be an experienced car driver and must have been driving regularly during the six months immediately prior to this assessment. For overseas students the six months referred to must have been in the UK using a manual gear change right hand drive car. **There is no provision for training anyone.**

The idea is to find out if you encounter a significant problem in adapting to minibus driving. Remember, driving techniques apart, the person also matters because driving a minibus makes you responsible for the safety of others.

Otherwise, you are assessed on the following:

- 1) General Control of the Vehicle and Safety Practices
- 2) Managing space around vehicle both mobile and stationary
- 3) Showing your intentions to other drivers (vehicle position etc)
- 4) Identify risks and showing driving which will minimise them

You get one mark for each of the above categories:

- A = you must be good
- B = okay
- C = even scoring one means you cannot drive a minibus for the Union Society

If you still want to do it, apply to the Activities Office.

There is no set date for these assessments - they are scheduled on availability of staff, students and the minibus.

Remember: the driving licence of all students who wish to continue driving minibuses will be checked at the beginning of each new term.

HIRE DETAILS

Most of our minibuses are hired through the following company:

* Pattersons,
 Forth Street,
 Behind Central Station,
 Newcastle upon Tyne
 Tel: 0191 261 2661

Please note Pattersons opening hours:

Monday to Friday	8.30a.m to 5.00p.m
Saturday	8.30a.m to 12 noon
Sunday	Closed

FUEL

Pattersons runs full to full. Please fill fuel tank before returning the bus (It is more expensive for Pattersons to fill the tank when you return).

CHARGES

A deposit of £250 cash is required before a booking can be accepted and therefore you must have £250 available in your account to book a minibus. Our vehicle excess policy is £400 at present. If you cause damage to the vehicle the costs will automatically be £250 however if the cost exceeds this then your club/socoeity will have to pay the balance up to £400

There is no standard charge for minibus hire. A club or society will pay the full cost of hire and insurance. Check on the price on hire of the vehicle. There is no Sunday Hire unless another Club/Society has a minibus on the Saturday or the Club/Society is prepared to pay weekend rates.

APPROVAL OF DRIVERS AND DRIVING LICENCE REQUIREMENTS

Any person wishing to drive a minibus must:

- Satisfy the criteria set out by the insurance or hire company
- Fulfil the licence conditions
- Be competent to drive the vehicle
- Pass Student Union Assessment Test

The following explains the licensing position of drivers of minibuses in association with a Section 19 Permit.

1) Car Licences held before the 1st January 1997

If you had entitlement to drive cars prior to the 1st January 1997 – shown as Group A (B for automatics) on an old style licence or a category B or D1 on a new style licence you can drive a minibus provided you are:

- Aged Over 21
- The minibus has a maximum of 17 seats.

2) Car Licences held after the 1st January 1997

Drivers who pass their car test on or after the 1st January 1997 will now obtain category B entitlement which will allow the driving of vehicles with no more than 8 passenger seats.

It will be necessary to meet higher medical standards and take an appropriate test to obtain category D1 for vehicles up to 17 seats.

However:

Voluntary drivers will be able to drive a minibus up to 16 passenger seats without having to obtain category D1 provided:

- You drive on behalf of a non-commercial body for social purposes but not for hire or reward, unless operating under a permit.
- You are aged 21.
- You have held a car (category B) licence for at least 2 years
- You are providing your service on a voluntary basis

- The minibus maximum weight is not more than 3.5 tonnes excluding any specialist equipment for the carriage of disabled passengers. Minibuses up to 4.25 tonnes will be permitted in certain circumstances.

When driving a minibus under these conditions you may not receive any payment or consideration for doing so other than out of pocket expenses or tow any size trailer. You can only drive minibuses in this country.

COLLECTING KEYS

Release notes need to be collected from the Activities Office. Once you have the release note, take it to the relevant collection point which will be highlighted on the back of the note.

PERMITS

When a Club or Society come to collect their release note the minibus driver will have to sign and leave a £10 deposit for that permit (disc). The disc must be fixed to the inside of the windscreen so that it can be easily seen from the outside without obstructing the driver's view. If you have hired the Union Society minibus, a permanent permit will be displayed.

It is an offence not to display the disc

PARKING

Please do not park minibuses in the service lane (between the Playhouse) outside the Basement. Use King's Walk instead.

ROAD WORTHINESS OF THE VEHICLE

The driver must check a hired vehicle very carefully on delivery.

Before taking over responsibility for any vehicle, all drivers must carry out the pre-journey checks from the following list, or satisfy themselves that such checks have already been carried out by the operator prior to handing over the vehicle. The pre-journey checks must be carried out at least on a daily basis whilst the vehicle is in use.

- Brakes and steering operate correctly
- There is an adequate supply of water in the windscreen wash reservoir and that windscreen wash and wipers function correctly.
- There are correct fluid levels in hydraulic systems, particularly the braking system and the engine oil level is correct.
- There is an adequately stocked first aid kit; any items used from the kit should be replaced without delay.

- There is a vehicle fire extinguisher mounted in an easily accessible position.
- All windows are clean in order to ensure good all round visibility
- Lights, including brake lights and indicators are clean and working
- All doors open and close properly
- Mirrors are correctly adjusted, clean, undamaged and unobstructed
- Tyres are inflated to the correct pressure and are free of dangerous cuts or cracks, tread depth is at least 1.6mm and wheel nuts are tight.
- A spare wheel is carried and is also in good condition and correctly inflated.

THE LOADING OF MINIBUSES

The number of people and the weight of luggage carried must not exceed the maximum limits specified by the manufacturer of the vehicle. If a large amount of luggage is to be carried it may be necessary to reduce the number of passengers in order to remain within the maximum loading limits. All luggage that may shift due to the movement of the vehicle must be safely secured. If roof racks are used, they must comply with the guidance given by the manufacturer of the vehicle.

Note however that the use of roof racks is not recommended, as this not only alters the height of the vehicle but also the centre of gravity. It may also create additional manual handling problems during loading and unloading. The use of a second vehicle is a much safer option.

THE TOWING OF TRAILERS

The towing of any trailers is restricted to those drivers only who possess a full D1 category licence. Drivers driving minibuses as a voluntary status without category D1 are not permitted to tow any size trailer. If a trailer is being towed no passengers may be carried behind the front row of seats unless there is a side door which is easily accessible to passengers.

Before towing a trailer, the following checks must be carried out to ensure:

- The vehicle is appropriate for use with the type of trailer in question.
- The weight of the vehicle plus the trailer is within the vehicle gross weight limit.
- The kerbside weight of the towing vehicle is clearly marked on the front nearside of the vehicle.
- The downward force from the loaded trailer on the towing ball is within the limits imposed by the towing vehicle manufacturer.
- The axle loads of the towing vehicle are not exceeded.

- A breakaway chain is in use, which will activate the hand brake should the coupling break. Advice on this matter should be sought from the trailer manufacturer or approved dealer.
- The unladen weight of the trailer and trailer type pressures are clearly marked on the trailer.
- The total gross weight (trailer weight plus maximum load to be carried) is clearly marked on the front of the trailer
- The trailer hand brake/overrun brake functions properly.
- The trailer lights and indicators work.
- The load is securely lashed to the trailer body or frame.
- There is suitable marking of any rear overhang greater than one metre by using a “Long Vehicle” sign or other approved method (e.g. warning tape) or an approved light in hours of darkness or bad weather.

When towing a trailer drivers must be very cautious about the vehicle speed. Vehicle/trailer combinations can become unstable at speeds below the legal maximum, particularly when being passed by fast moving large vehicles, in windy conditions or when manoeuvring. On long journeys the trailer and vehicle should be checked at least once every two hours of travel.

Users of boat trailers are strongly advised to refer to the Amateur Rowing Association’s booklet “Towing of Boat Trailers”.

JOURNEY PLANNING AND DRIVING TIMES

A planned journey reduces the risk of driver fatigue and is more efficient, saving time, stress and money. Trip organizers and drivers should ensure that each journey is planned in advance in terms of its time and distance. A suitable route should include places for rest, refreshment, comfort breaks and re-fueling if necessary. Drivers should check information on road works and weather conditions that may affect their route, before they set out.

Bear in mind that non-professional drivers are likely to find driving more stressful than professionals, especially if they only drive minibuses occasionally.

Do not agree to drive unless you are fit: free from illness, medication, and alcohol. If you are in any doubt as to your fitness to drive, you should see the advice of a doctor or contact Newcastle Occupational Health.

Tiredness of the driver has often been a significant factor in accidents involving minibuses. The presence of a second driver should always be considered both on account of possible incapacity of the first driver and also because of tiredness.

The maximum number of hours that a driver may drive in any 24 hour period is 9 hours subject to a weekly maximum of 56 hours. Every driver must take a continuous rest period of at least 11 hours in every 24 hour period. A bed, bunk or couchette must be available for use during the rest period. The driver must not be tired at the start of a journey.

The maximum continuous period of driving should not exceed two and a half hours and should be followed by a minimum break of 10 minutes out of the vehicle. Time spent crawling in motorway type hold-ups should count as part of the driving period, as should any period spend driving to pick up a party.

CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL

It is an absolute rule that a driver does not consume any alcohol during or in the period before any journey. Since blood alcohol level should be zero during all driving activities, care should be exercised if consuming alcohol even on the previous day. Alcohol must not be consumed in the 8 hour period immediately prior to driving.

Alcohol must not be consumed by passengers whilst the vehicle is in transit.

SPEED LIMITS

All speed limits must be complied with. The relevant limits are:

	For minibuses	For minibuses towing a trailer
Motorways	70 m.p.h.	60 m.p.h.
Dual Carriageways	60 m.p.h.	60 m.p.h.
Other roads where a lower limit is not signposted	50 m.p.h.	50 m.p.h.
		The outer (overtaking) lane of a three or four lane motorway must not be used

REMINDERS

- Please remember that speed limits do apply and so do not drive at excessive speeds – you will be personally responsible for the fine.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times
- Leave all gangways and doors clear so that people can exit the vehicle safely.
- It is **illegal** to consume alcohol on minibuses regardless of who is driving.
- Please return the minibus in the state it was in when you picked it up. This means that any litter must be removed and if the bus is dirty, clean both inside and out. Spare petrol cans are for emergencies only, if used, fill them up or you will lose your deposit.

- Please report any damages to Pattersons and the Activities Office and sign for them when returning the bus.
- The fuel tank of the minibus should be full at both point of collection and point of return.

Please remember to register your trip with the Activities Office at least one week before you leave.

EQUIPMENT/PERSONAL ITEMS

Any Union Society, Athletic Union or personal equipment left in an unattended vehicle is not insured. Hence, if it is stolen the person responsible for the equipment will have to pay for its replacement.

It should also be pointed out that leaving personal items in an unattended minibus is also tempting thieves and if the vehicle is damaged as a result of being broken into the Club or Society using the van will again have to incur these costs.

DOCUMENTS TO BE CARRIED BY DRIVERS

Drivers should carry the following documents at all times:

- Their own driving licence
- Details of insurance
- Section 19 small bus permit
- A copy of this code must be kept in a durable folder and placed in a secure position accessible within each vehicle.

USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES

Many Clubs and Societies will, at some time, use private vehicles during their activities. When using private vehicles the Club/Society must ensure the following:

- The vehicle has all the necessary insurance, tax, mot and service certificates and is road worthy.
- The relevant insurance company has been informed and is happy for the vehicle to be used for your club or society activities.
- Only licensed drivers who are insured to use that particular vehicle are allowed to drive.
- Trips forms are still submitted to the Union Society for all trips.
- All relevant advice and procedures given in the minibus guidance (see above) should be implemented into the use of private vehicle. This includes for example, procedures on accidents, breakdowns, driving hours and driver fitness etc.

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Please return to: Mark Bennett, Activities Office

Guidance for the Safe Use and Hiring of Minibuses

Name of Club/Society:

This is to certify that I have read and understand the conditions outlined in the document
'Guidance for the Safe use and Hiring of Minibuses'

Name of person (please print name)

Signature:

Date: