

# A Guide to Parkour Clubs/Societies at University

By Simon Vardy

## Introduction

Starting up and running a new club/society at your university can be quite a daunting task! This is why we have developed this document to give some guidance and help in answering some of the most frequently asked questions when applying to set up a new club/society. It will also provide guidance on safe practice documents such as risk assessments, safeguarding, expanding your community, and running your club successfully.

## Thanks

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## Setting up a new club/society

If there isn't a parkour community at your university, you might want to consider setting one up. In this section you will find lots of information and answers to many questions. It is by no means comprehensive, but will give you a good idea of most areas and topics that you may be asked to discuss when applying. Please note that the answers given here are for guidance only and you should spend plenty of time considering each answer yourself when preparing your application. For the best chance of being successful, you should treat the application as you would a job application and really sell the benefits of the club and the sport to all potential participants, have as much detail and planning as possible in place to demonstrate organisation and stability, and be prepared to potentially review and re-apply.

### How do I create a new club/society at my university?

*Tips/Answer:* Most universities have an online application form. For example, this is the page and form for Reading University – [Set Up A New Group | RUSU](#)

### Is there a BUCS competition in this sport?

*Tips/Answer:* No

### Is the sport recognised by Sport England/Sport Scotland/Sport NI/Sport Wales?

*Tips/Answer:* Yes

### Does the sport's National Governing Body offer a membership appropriate for university-based clubs?

*Tips/Answer:* Yes – <https://parkour.uk/product/associate-membership/>

**Explain the nature of the club's activities and any activity that has already taken place.**

*Tips/Answer: e.g. "Parkour is a sport focused on the love of movement: using your body as a tool to get you from one point to another in unique, creative, and challenging ways. We would be encouraging students to join us in weekly sessions to try something new and challenging. We will provide a good variety of training and socials alike, with the aim of bringing our members together and creating a happy community with a passion for the sport. So far a group of us have met regularly as an unofficial club and through encouraging friends and course mates we have grown to a regular group of around 30 individuals who want to participate in a structured club environment based around our sport."*

**Explain how the club would operate, e.g. ideas on training times, venues, competitions, learn to play sessions.**

*Tips/Answer: e.g. "We will be training indoors weekly at XXX on Wednesdays. Also outdoor training sessions – Saturdays at XXX. We would look to hold open taster sessions throughout the year and link with XXX community locally for exhibition/showcase events. There currently isn't a competition in our sport, however we would want to potentially look at joint showcase events with other universities."*

**Is this activity already supplied within another club/society?**

*Tips/Answer: If another club, e.g. gymnastics, is offering a similar provision then it makes it less likely that your university will support a new application. You may need to be very clear that parkour is distinct from other more common sports. Consider speaking to the other club/society about expanding that provision or separating it from their main offer. If splitting from another club, mention things like collaboration and expansion to provide specific support in order to add strength to your application.*

**Explain why a new club/society should be created to support this activity.**

*Tips/Answer: e.g. "Parkour and freerunning is the sport of moving from A to B in an athletic, expressive manner. Developed from military obstacle courses, the aim is to move across a complex environment, negotiating obstacles by a combination of running, jumping, climbing, and flipping. A mix between gymnastics and athletics, this is a sport that is unique and caters to everyone's interests. The sport is accessible to all skills sets, from absolute beginners to seasoned experts! It is inclusive and everyone can have fun, so there's no pressure to do anything that someone isn't comfortable doing."*

**How many students at your university have expressed an interest in joining the club? Can you provide evidence?**

*Tips/Answer: The minimum number varies across universities, but most will look for around 30 new members before considering supporting an application.*

**How much will it cost to set up this club/society? Consider things such as equipment, kit, training venues, coaching, NGB membership, etc.**

*Tips/Answer: This will vary a great deal depending on your club and where you plan on training. If there are no initial setup costs or the club can cover training venue costs through club memberships, then make sure to mention this in your application.*

### How much will it cost for an individual to participate in this sport?

*Tips/Answer: Consider all membership fees (including Parkour UK) within this answer and look at what other clubs at your university charge as membership fees as this will help cover things such as training venue and coaching costs. This way you will have the best idea of what that cost may look like to an individual. For example, some university clubs/societies across the UK vary from around £8 to £20 for a yearly membership, with weekly costs for training venue hire (that you might want to incorporate into the membership fee).*

### Are there any potential problems or obstacles that would impact the successful set up of your club?

*Tips/Answer: Consider things such as access to suitable facilities. Would everything be outside in the local community? How does that effect things such as risk assessments? Could you link with a local parkour community for facilities and coaching support?*

### Any other relevant information to support the application.

*Tips/Answer: Anything that you think will strengthen your application should be mentioned here. For example, case studies of other universities might help. Having a partnership set up and ready to go with a local parkour community. Essentially anything that makes it clear that your new society/club will be stable and sustainable for the future (development plans are often helpful in this situation), financially viable, and provides a new opportunity that isn't overlapping with a current opportunity.*

### Safeguarding and Risk Assessment

*Tips/Answer: Most universities will ask a club to produce a risk assessment. Generally, this will fit within their own template, but you can find some samples within the documentation provided here. Similarly, you will find risk-benefit and safeguarding guidelines/documents that will allow you to prepare these documents in advance if required. It's worth noting that for the most part the University and Sports Department will have their own documentation on this and anything from Parkour UK would be supplemental to this.*

### Do we need to speak to our university about activity on campus?

*Tips/Answer: If there is no suitable indoor facility within your city then you can look at what else is available, particularly on campus. Consider speaking to local parkour companies if there are any in your area and see if you can integrate activity with them. If you plan on running sessions on campus it will be worthwhile starting a dialogue with your university's Campus Services or Campus Security. Finding out any issues in advance and starting off with a positive relationship with them will allow you to integrate the right information into risk-assessments and have a successful interaction with them moving forwards. It also demonstrates you are proactive in exploring all avenues and solving problems.*

### Do we need a committee in place already?

*Tips/Answer: Having a committee in place will always help you run the club, although it is unlikely that a university will expect you to have one in place prior to being accepted. It certainly won't hurt an application though if you can demonstrate that you have multiple potential club/society members who are keen to take up roles within the club. You can often find information on your students' union site about what positions are expected to form a committee as well and guidance on this often comes after being accepted as a new club/society.*

### Top tips from your peers:

*"Contact the sports union early on, find out what you need to do to become a club: when the deadline for applications is and what you need to have ready for the application (e.g. a certain number of interested students signed up, a small committee).*

*It is much easier to get people interested to join when you have already been accepted as a club, since you can advertise in the sports fair at the start of the year and have a page on the official website for your university. So don't be put off if you find it hard to gather lots of interest to begin with!*

*You will probably start off with just a few enthusiastic individuals setting up the club – but it's a lot of work for just 2/3 people to organise everything, so I recommend that a month or two into the first semester you encourage keen/regular members to get more involved and join the committee and help organising the club (that way the workload gets split between more people, but also gets those people more engaged with the club).*

*Make the most of any existing parkour community in the area! E.g. local coaching organisations who could lead some sessions for you, a local jamming community who you can meet up with in addition to specific university sessions.*

*Go on an adventure early on! E.g. after a few weeks of sessions to get people started with basic parkour movement, go on a day trip/jam to a nearby city or parkour park. This is great way to bring people closer together and experience the joy of parkour exploration of new places. If there are any other university clubs in nearby cities, you could invite them along too and make connections."*

**Sonia Marshall** – The University of Edinburgh

## Risk Assessment, Risk-Benefit Assessment, and Safeguarding

Risk assessment, risk-benefit assessment, and safeguarding forms a very important part of setting up or running a club/society. Most universities will ask their clubs and societies to renew their risk assessments on an annual basis, especially when changing over to a new committee each year. Alongside this document you will find a few sample risk-assessments and risk-benefit assessments courtesy of Parkour UK or university-based communities. If you use those along with the following key tips, you will be able to fill your university's forms out easily.

### University Risk Assessment/Risk-Benefit Assessment

A risk assessment or risk-benefit assessment is a really important document to demonstrate that as a club you understand the risks involved in your activity and how to manage them. This shows to a university that your club can run as safely as possible.

The form that you will use for your club/society will normally be based on a template from your specific university/students' union. This allows the university to keep all their data and information in the same format. There are a few samples included in this pack that will help you think about how to fill in your particular form and although they will all look different, the general process, wording, and information will be very similar. We use a risk-benefit assessment at Parkour UK and have included a sample of our form for universities.

Before starting to fill out any risk assessments you should be considering what the hazards are, who is at risk, and finally what controls are needed. If you can identify all these things, then you are almost done, because these will form the basis of all the information required to fill in the forms.

When filling out the form you will often find plenty of guidance on the actual form itself. You should be clear in the information you provide and particularly in methods of reducing risk. If you can include as much information as possible this shows that you fully understand what the risks are and how to control them which is always very helpful for your relationship with the university and sports union.

Your university will also provide you with information on committee positions, as mentioned earlier, but it often makes life easier if the job of filling in the risk assessment/risk-benefit assessment is allocated to a particular committee member and then reviewed as a whole.

### Safeguarding

Safeguarding is very important and particularly focussed on working with children and vulnerable adults. Parkour UK has its own safeguarding documentation included in this pack, but if your club/society is involved in any work with children and vulnerable adults, through volunteer work for example, then there will be accessible documentation specific to your university and/or sports department that should be adhered to.



## Expanding your Parkour Community

There are many opportunities that your university will offer for you as a club/society to get involved in. Alongside these, there are many ways in which you can expand and develop what you can offer for your members.

### Local Community

One simple way to expand your university parkour community is to look at what is available locally to you. You might find a local community that you can use for coaching, training sessions, or just fun meets. This will help develop what you can offer as a club/society to other potential students who want to get involved.

### University Initiatives

Many universities run a 'Give it a Go' style programme where clubs can offer one off sessions to potential members so they can come down and try a new activity or sport. These are a great opportunity to inspire new members to join and can really show off what parkour is all about.

### Outreach Programmes

Lots of outreach programmes tend to be university-led programmes that use sports as a way of encouraging interaction and engagement with the community, including underprivileged schools and similar organisations in your local area. These can be a very rewarding way of growing what you can offer to your members for their own experience, as well as interacting with other clubs/societies from your university and the local community. These sorts of things often attract new members as it helps them develop individually whilst within a safe community.

### Volunteer Programmes

Similar to the outreach programmes, these will get club members involved in voluntary activities within the community. Although this might not be directly participating in parkour, it might be something that your club/society can offer to sign up for to expand the experience of your members.

There are so many different things that your club could get involved in and considering things like these and demonstrating how your club can offer a broad experience for your student members can promote and expand your parkour community. Don't forget to also keep up to date with what Parkour UK might be running that you could get your club/society involved in.