

TRIP LEADERSHIP IN THE VICTORIAN SPELEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION INC.

INTRODUCTION

At the March 2005, meeting VSA changed its membership system structure to better reflect the realities of the present times. When organised caving first started and ASF was formed in the 1950's, it was a requirement that clubs have two classes of members distinguishing between beginner and experienced (leader). The VSA Full Member requirement was always ambiguous because it was framed around "skills" rather than "leadership". The assumption that a skilled caver is also a competent leader is not always the case. As well as this, social attitudes to leadership in outdoor activities changed over the last 50 years.

However nowhere in VSA's aims or rules is it required to run trips for people. Rather, members organize and participate in trips within the aims of the club. These activities need to be organised safely and competently.

The aims of VSA are:

- 1 To provide opportunities and facilities for participation in speleological activities;
- 2 To represent the interests of persons concerned with such activities;
- 3 To explore, map and study caves in Victoria and elsewhere;
- 4 To permanently and systematically record the results of such exploration, mapping and study, and to maintain a register of all Victorian caves;
- 5 To foster the conservation of caves and related features;
- 6 To co-operate with government authorities and other relevant bodies to achieve any of the above aims; and
- 7 To engage in any other activities deemed by the Association to be relevant to the furtherance of speleology.

The membership changes were as follows:

Full Members shall:

- i) Have attained the age of 18 years, and
- ii) Have considerable caving experience from a number of caves and different areas developed over a period of at least 12 months, either as an Associate or Introductory Member of this Association or as a Full Member of any other approved speleological body in which case they should have participated in VSA activities, and
- iii) Be able to competently use and maintain their personal equipment and have developed proficiency in a range of caving skills.
- iv) Be conversant with the ASF Code of Conservation and Ethics, the ASF Minimum Impact Caving Code and ASF Safety Codes, and
- v) Show a responsible and safe attitude towards caves and caving

In special cases, the Committee may recommend for Full Membership a person not satisfying all of these requirements. Note that Rule 3A.(b) requires that a majority of Full Members present at a general meeting approve a person for Full Membership.

The following additional section on Leadership Requirements was added.

Leadership Requirements:

A Leadership Subcommittee of VSA members will be appointed by the Committee consisting of not more than five (5) and not less than three (3) experienced Full Members. This Leadership Subcommittee will administer the leadership scheme and

recommend members as Leaders for the Committee to approve. The Subcommittee should provide assistance for members wishing to develop their leadership skills to become Leaders. This would include the organisation of mentors for members wishing to become Leaders. In the case of a Candidate for Leadership being aggrieved, the President would mediate.

Experienced Full Members are encouraged to become Leaders for Horizontal Caves, Vertical Caves, Club Trips or Expeditions. In addition to the basic technical caving skills required for horizontal caving and/or vertical caving they should be able to show evidence of their capabilities in planning and preparation for specific cave trips, caving trips (or expeditions); evidence of how they conduct trips citing selection of participants for the trip, and ensuring all participants are appropriately equipped, briefed and aware of what the cave (or trip) entails. Candidates should provide information on trips that they have led. A log or diary could provide good evidence of leadership skills. A candidate wishing to become a leader should nominate whether they wish to be considered for Cave Leader (Horizontal and/or Vertical), Trip Leader or Expedition Leader. Candidates will be expected to complete a self-assessment questionnaire requiring answers to questions on leadership citing evidence from their own conduct of trips or of observations on other trips they have participated in. They will also be requested to provide the name(s) of a referee(s) familiar with their caving experience and leading skills.

Renewal of a member's Leadership Classification will be done at three year intervals. Normally evidence of having successfully led an appropriate club trip (at least one) during this period will be sufficient.

Interim Arrangements

Current Full Members will become accredited Leaders in the categories they choose (unless they choose otherwise). These members will have a three year period in which to complete the accreditation process and to have led a trip to retain their leadership status. Extra members have been added to this list in 2005 and 2006 to enable trips to continue to function properly.

No changes were made to the rest of rules 8 & 9 as changes for these needed to be developed and refined first.

VSA LEADERSHIP PROCEDURES

VSA procedures are expressed in the Constitution and Rules, which are available from the Committee.

The Leadership structure is administered by a Leadership Subcommittee appointed by the Committee for a two (2) year period, preferably staggered from Annual Elections, and consisting of at least 3 and not more than 5 experienced Full members. This Leadership Subcommittee will administer the leadership scheme and recommend members as Leaders for the Committee to approve. The Subcommittee should provide assistance for members wishing to develop their leadership skills to become Leaders. This would include the organisation of mentors for members wishing to become Leaders. In the case of a Candidate for Leadership being aggrieved, the President would mediate.

The VSA Leadership Scheme is not a qualification (*sensu stricta*) nor a specific membership type, but is a rating applied to particular Full Members for a specific period of time. It is the recognition that an experienced Full Member of VSA has appropriate leadership skills. Full Members have caving skills but these need to be constantly updated and used, and skilled cavers need to use and develop their leadership skills to lead trips to a high standard.

A flow diagram of the sequence of procedures is shown in Figure 1.

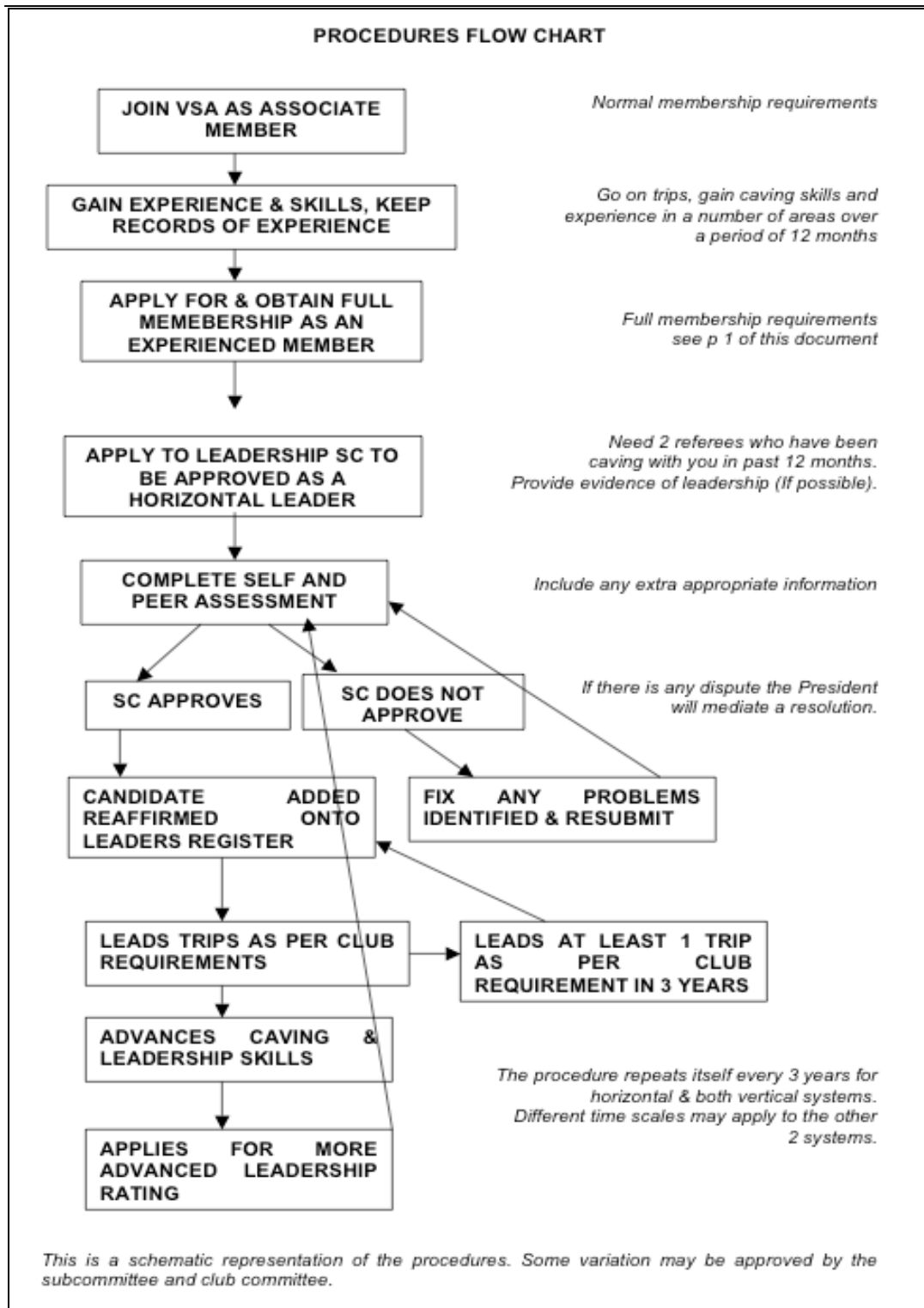


Figure 1 Flow diagram of procedures

Specific Criteria

A "handbook" will be developed which will include club procedures and process of achieving leader classification, definition of competency, general description of the 5 trip types, the questionnaires, both self assessment and peer review, for each trip type, glossary of technical terms, currency of classification, and information on trip planning, risk management, first aid qualifications, trip logs, ASF Codes, Adventurous Activity Standards, and a reference list including relevant websites.

Types of Trips

1. Leadership classification was for trips rather than caves, except in special circumstances eg M49, M125, as caves are an integral part of a trip rather than separate activities.

2. There are five trip types: Horizontal, Vertical (ladder), Vertical (SRT), Expedition and Special Caves eg M 49, M 125.

Eligibility & Prerequisites

1. Leaders must be Financial Full members of VSA.
2. Leaders are expected to have a reasonable level of skill competence prior to applying for leadership rating.
3. Leaders for the Categories Vertical (ladder), Vertical (SRT), Expedition and Special Caves must also have the basic Horizontal Caving Leader rating.
4. Leadership rating is related to the overall trip not just visiting of particular cave, Category 5 excepted.
5. Formal First Aid qualifications are **desirable** but not mandatory.

Currency

1. Leadership rating is current for 3 years from the date of acceptance by the VSA Committee.

2. Renewal is normally by leading a trip in the category concerned within 3 years for Horizontal and Vertical and 5 years for Expedition and Special Caves. This can be varied by the Leadership Subcommittee.

Assessment

1. Application for consideration as a leader is to be submitted to the Leadership subcommittee with two (2) referees who have been caving recently with the applicant.

2. The Self Assessment and Peer Assessment Questionnaires completed and submitted to the subcommittee with any other relevant information, e.g. log book, trip reports.

3. Peer Assessment should be completed by a VSA Full Member who has caved with the applicant within the last 12 months. This does not necessarily have to be a current Leader.

4. Logbooks are not mandatory.

5. Applicants must show knowledge of and compliance with the ASF Codes and Risk Management policy.

6. In cases where an applicant feels aggrieved by the process the President will mediate a resolution.

Issues of Group Dynamics and Group Management

Leadership is the ability of an individual to set an example for others. It is an attitude that influences the environment around us. Leadership does not involve changing the mindset of the group, but the cultivation of an environment that brings out the best (inspires) the individuals in that group. Leaders accomplish this by knowing why people may react favorably to a situation in situation A, but get frustrated or disillusioned in situation B. When leaders change their actions in accordance with their awareness of what those actions really mean, they affect the emotional and perceptive affects on a group. By taking control of the “standard” reactions to the actions of the group, a leader can in effect change the psychology of the group and change the culture of an organization.

Competency

Competency is defined as being competent is a particular area. A core competency is fundamental knowledge, ability, or expertise in a specific subject area or skill set. For example, an individual who becomes certified as a Microsoft Certified Software Engineer (MCSE) is said to have a core competency in certain Microsoft systems and networks. Companies with specific strengths in the marketplace, such as data storage or the development of accounting applications, can be said to have a core competency in that area. The core part of the term indicates that the individual has a strong basis from which to gain the additional competence to do a specific job or that a company has a strong basis from which to develop additional products. This system has become a common way of assessment over the past 15 - 20 years and is more suitable for practical situations than the examination/test method.

In this case the applicant needs to show competency in trip leadership and this assumes a satisfactory competence in the relevant caving skills.

The competency areas are listed in the tables for each leadership criteria in the Caveleader_assesment_criteria.doc.

Conduct of Trips

Trips are conducted according to the club bylaws. These are not included in the current rules and as such do not require a Special General Meeting to change them. They do not need to be notified to the relevant government department, as they are not part of the constitution per se. However, they need to be updated as a matter of urgency to reflect changes in the leadership structure.

Self-appraisal of Caving and Leadership Skills:

Name:

The checklist below will enable you to assess yourself in the areas of **horizontal caving skills** and **leadership of horizontal caving trips**. Competence refers to the level of skill, knowledge and attitude required to perform these tasks at a satisfactory level within a horizontal cave. There is, of course, a range of variables within the caving situation.

	Competent	Not yet Competent
I am confident that I would be able to demonstrate movement safely & efficiently through a horizontal cave		
Identify hazards commonly present and show strategies for dealing with them, considering the experience and skills of the trip participants. Be able to negotiate features of caves e.g. stream passage, squeeze, rockpile, short vertical section.		
Communicate the appropriate information on the trip objective and likely hazards to the rest of the party		
Be able to navigate to a cave and through a cave.		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes, Risk Management policy and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards.		
Show techniques for negotiating sensitive or fragile areas and moving through a cave with minimal impact. Identify types of damage and inappropriate foreign material found in caves.		
Own, use and maintain appropriate protective clothing for caving: eg caving suits, boots, helmet, lights, gloves. Own or have access to and be able to maintain group equipment. Know how to use the appropriate equipment.		
Ensure that trip members are appropriately briefed on trip arrangements and requirements including food, accommodation, transport and caving equipment.		
Understand cave access issues and requirements & be able to negotiate access for a trip.		
Have knowledge of different types of caves and caving areas in Victoria. (List any interstate areas known also)		
Apply safety procedures at a personal level including how to tie knots suitable for a simple belay over a difficult area.		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser. Follow the club procedures for the conduct of a trip.		
Know and be able to implement procedures to follow in a newly discovered cave		
Be able to move a party through a cave environment efficiently and safely, causing minimum impact.		
Manage a group, including managing a group with inexperienced cavers		

Peer appraisal of Caving Skills Name of peer (must be a financial full member of VSA):

I have been caving with _____ within the last 12 months. He/she has shown competence in the following areas:

	Competent	Not yet competent
Identify hazards commonly present and show strategies for dealing with them, considering the experience and skills of the trip participants. Be able to negotiate features of caves e.g. stream passage, squeeze, rockpile, short vertical section.		
Communicate the appropriate information on the trip objective and likely hazards to the rest of the party		
Be able to navigate to a cave and through a cave.		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes, Risk Management policy and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards.		
Show techniques for negotiating sensitive or fragile areas and moving through a cave with minimal impact. Identify types of damage and inappropriate foreign material found in caves.		
Own, use and maintain appropriate protective clothing for caving: eg caving suits, boots, helmet, lights, gloves. Own or have access to and be able to maintain group equipment. Know how to use the appropriate equipment.		
Ensure that trip members are appropriately briefed on trip arrangements and requirements including food, accommodation, transport and caving equipment.		
Understand cave access issues and requirements & be able to negotiate access for a trip.		
Have knowledge of different types of caves and caving areas in Victoria. (List any interstate areas known		
Apply safety procedures at a personal level including how to tie knots suitable for a simple belay over a difficult area.		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser. Follow the club procedures for the conduct of a trip.		
Know and be able to implement procedures to follow in a newly discovered cave		
Be able to move a party through a cave environment efficiently and safely, causing minimum impact.		
Manage a group, including managing a group with inexperienced cavers		

Any other comments:

Signed _____ Date _____

Self-appraisal of Vertical (ladder) Cave Leadership Skills:

Name:

The checklist below will enable you to assess yourself in the areas of vertical (ladder) caving and leadership skills. Competence refers to the level of skill, knowledge and attitude required to perform these tasks at a satisfactory level within a vertical cave. There is, of course, a range of variables within the caving situation.

	Competent	Not yet competent
I feel confident that in a vertical (ladder) caving situation I would be able to demonstrate leading a caving trip to a vertical cave using ladders:		
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Identify the vertical hazards likely to be present in the cave and show how to avoid them		
Able to select, fit and use laddering equipment; demonstrate correct laddering technique		
Able to select, fit and use abseiling equipment correctly and safely; demonstrate correct abseiling technique		
Apply safety procedures including appropriate equipment, at a personal level and ensure this information is communicated to the party.		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes and Risk Management Policy, and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards as applying to laddering, abseiling and belaying.		
Be able to deal with non-routine situations whilst laddering, abseiling and belaying		
Be able to rig using natural or artificial anchors for laddering, abseiling and for belay systems		
Ensure that the trip participants are aware of and adhere to ASF codes of practice		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser		
Be able to move a party through a vertical cave environment efficiently and safely causing minimum impact		
De rig ropes and ladders safely and transport ropes and ladders appropriately		
Be able to use and establish an appropriate ladder, abseil and belay systems for dependent cavers		
Lead a group through a cave involving laddering and abseiling.		
Manage a group in a vertical cave situation		

Peer appraisal of Vertical (ladder) Cave Leadership Skills

Name of peer: _____

I have been caving with _____ within the last 12 months. He/she has shown leadership competence in the following areas:

	Competent	Not yet competent
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Identify the vertical hazards likely to be present in the cave and show how to avoid them		
Able to select, fit and use laddering equipment; demonstrate correct laddering technique		
Able to select, fit and use abseiling equipment correctly and safely; demonstrate correct abseiling technique		
Apply safety procedures including appropriate equipment, at a personal level and ensure this information is communicated to the party.		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes and Risk Management Policy, and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards as applying to laddering, abseiling and belaying.		
Be able to deal with non-routine situations whilst laddering, abseiling and belaying		
Be able to rig using natural or artificial anchors for laddering, abseiling and for belay systems		
Ensure that the trip participants are aware of and adhere to ASF codes of practice		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser		
Be able to move a party through a vertical cave environment efficiently and safely causing minimum impact		
De rig ropes and ladders safely and transport ropes and ladders appropriately		
Be able to use and establish an appropriate ladder, abseil and belay systems for dependent cavers		
Lead a group through a cave involving laddering and abseiling. Manage a group in a vertical cave situation.		
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Identify the vertical hazards likely to be present in the cave and show how to avoid them		

Any other comments:

Signed _____

Date _____

Self-appraisal of Vertical (SRT) Cave Leadership Skills:

Name:

The checklist below will enable you to assess yourself in the areas of vertical (SRT) caving and leadership skills. Competence refers to the level of skill, knowledge and attitude required to perform these tasks at a satisfactory level within a vertical cave. There is, of course, a range of variables within the caving situation.

I feel confident that in a vertical (SRT) caving situation I would be able to demonstrate leading a caving trip to a vertical cave:

	Competent	Not Yet competent
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Identify the vertical hazards likely to be present in the cave and show how to avoid them		
Able to select, fit and use SRT equipment; demonstrate correct SRT techniques including negotiating obstacles, rebelays, redirections, changeovers		
Demonstrate advanced climbing techniques		
Apply safety procedures including appropriate equipment at a personal level; optimise personal SRT rig to perform advanced techniques		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes & Risk Management Policy and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards as applying to vertical caving especially SRT.		
Be able to deal with non-routine situations in SRT situations		
Be able to rig using natural or artificial anchors for SRT; solve complex rigging problems		
Ensure that the trip participants are aware of and adhere to ASF codes of practice		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser/ Trip leader		
Be able to move a party through a cave environment efficiently and safely causing minimum impact using SRT techniques		
De rig ropes safely and transport ropes appropriately		
Be able to use and establish an appropriate SRT and belay systems for dependent cavers		
Lead a group through a cave involving SRT techniques		
Evaluate a vertical caving emergency and indicate a range of strategies for dealing with it; develop a plan of action. Indicate a range of rescue techniques		

Peer appraisal of Vertical (SRT) Cave Leadership Skills

Name of peer:

I have been caving with _____ within the last 12 months. He/she has shown leadership competence in the following areas:

	Competent	Not Yet competent
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Identify the vertical hazards likely to be present in the cave and show how to avoid them		
Able to select, fit and use SRT equipment; demonstrate correct SRT techniques including negotiating obstacles, rebelays, redirections, changeovers		
Demonstrate advanced climbing techniques		
Apply safety procedures including appropriate equipment at a personal level; optimise personal SRT rig to perform advanced techniques		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes & Risk Management Policy and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards as applying to vertical caving especially SRT.		
Be able to deal with non-routine situations in SRT situations		
Be able to rig using natural or artificial anchors for SRT; solve complex rigging problems		
Ensure that the trip participants are aware of and adhere to ASF codes of practice		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser/ Trip leader		
Be able to move a party through a cave environment efficiently and safely causing minimum impact using SRT techniques		
De rig ropes safely and transport ropes appropriately		
Be able to use and establish an appropriate SRT and belay systems for dependent cavers		
Lead a group through a cave involving SRT techniques		
Evaluate a vertical caving emergency and indicate a range of strategies for dealing with it; develop a plan of action. Indicate a range of rescue techniques		

Any other comments:

Signed _____ Date _____

Self-appraisal of Expedition Caving skills:

Name:

The checklist below will enable you to assess yourself in the areas of expedition skills. Competence refers to the level of skill, knowledge and attitude required to perform these tasks at a satisfactory level within a horizontal cave. There is, of course, a range of variables within the expedition situation.

I feel confident that in an expedition caving situation I would be able to demonstrate movement safely and efficiently through a cave:

	Competent	Not yet competent
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes, Risk Management Policy and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards as applies to expeditions, inc. International, interstate and Indigenous areas		
Show techniques for negotiating sensitive or fragile areas and moving through a cave with minimal impact. This includes access to sensitive areas by vehicle. Identify types of damage and inappropriate foreign material found in caves.		
Own (or have access to), use and maintain appropriate clothing and equipment for caving on an expedition;		
Own or have access to and maintain group equipment		
Understand cave access issues and requirements in remote areas.		
Understand documentation issues on expeditions and be able to implement appropriate measures		
Have a knowledge of different types of caves and caving areas		
Understand issues of personal and group safety eg camping, hygiene, food storage, fires, water supplies etc		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser		
Implement procedures to follow in a newly discovered cave in an expedition situation.		
Be able to implement appropriate communication strategies for expedition caving		
Be able to facilitate an expedition		

Peer appraisal of Caving Skills:

Name of peer:

I have been caving with _____ within the last 12 months. He/she has shown competence in the following areas:

	Competent	Not yet competent
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		
Possess a copy of, and understand the ASF Safety, Ethics and Conservation, Minimum Impact codes and Victorian Adventure Activity Standards as applies to expeditions, inc. International and Indigenous areas		
Show techniques for negotiating sensitive or fragile areas and moving through a cave with minimal impact. This includes access to sensitive areas by vehicle. Identify types of damage and inappropriate foreign material found in caves.		
Own, use and maintain appropriate clothing and equipment for caving on an expedition;		
Own or have access to and maintain group equipment		
Understand cave access issues and requirements in remote areas.		
Have a knowledge of different types of caves and caving areas		
Understand issues of personal and group safety eg camping, hygiene, food storage, fires, water supplies etc		
Ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are implemented including that the trip is listed with the Program Organiser		
Implement procedures to follow in a newly discovered cave in an expedition situation.		
Be able to implement appropriate communication strategies for expedition caving		
Be able to facilitate an expedition		
Hold and implement the horizontal caving skill and leadership level		

Any other comments:

Signed _____ Date _____