

The Climbing Wall Award Scheme

Since its launch at the start of 2008 the Climbing Wall Award has proved its popularity. In the first year over 1,000 candidates registered for the award with their national training board. Nearly 700 of them undertook training courses in the first year and, amazingly, well over 100 also completed their assessment in 2008.

The Climbing Wall Award offers candidates an optional module for those who might want to work on top-access towers running climbing or abseil sessions. In the first year that the award was running over 340 candidates chose to do this additional training with nearly 50 of them completing the assessment of this module.

'The CWA is an excellent instructional award as it covers the two essential areas needed to become an effective climbing instructor. Firstly, it equips candidates with risk assessment and group management skills to run safe climbing sessions with students on a wide range of climbing walls. Secondly, it introduces key concepts of climbing mechanics and provides candidates with practical techniques to coach the essence of the activity itself - climbing movement.' **Guy Jarvis - Chief Instructor, Undercover Rock**

The training includes: risk assessment and risk management, equipment selection, care and fitting; belaying and supervising others; managing groups in busy walls; planning and running climbing sessions; warming up; teaching basic movement skills as well as a variety of personal skills and knowledge.

'These days most people are introduced to climbing through climbing walls. The content of the CWA ensures that the first experience with an instructor will be a quality, structured introduction as well as safe and fun. There is a wealth of information on responsibilities, techniques for movement coaching, injury avoidance as well as safety ropework and belay skills. At last a qualification fit for the job in climbing walls.' **Martin Doyle - Chief Executive, Plas y Brenin**

Before attending a training course candidates must have registered for the CWA, be aged 17 as an absolute minimum, climbed on 3 different walls on 15 occasions and have led climbs. One of the walls visited must be a major public venue. For assessment candidates must be at least 18 and have completed a training course or gained exemption. They must have recorded a minimum of 30 visits to at least 3 different venues and assisted on at least 15 instructed sessions on two different walls, one of which must be a large public facility.

'From a climbing wall's perspective the CWA is a superb qualification, because managers can employ instructors and allow outside instructors to operate inside their centres in the knowledge that these people have the skills and techniques to operate at the highest standards in a climbing wall environment. The atmosphere and situations that occur in a climbing wall can be very different to those on an outdoor crag and controlling a group effectively in a busy wall requires skills that a CWA holder will have specifically taught, not using techniques that have been adapted from elsewhere. The CWA holders also have the advantage of having movement coaching knowledge, and these skills and techniques will become more and more desirable as coaching and talent development become more prevalent.' **Rob Adie - Climbing Wall Officer, B.M.C.**

Interested in knowing more about the CWA? Couldn't be simpler. Have a look at information provided by the mountain leader training boards on the web - including downloadable copies of the full handbook.

Who to contact in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales?

MLTE - 01690 720314 : info@mlte.org : www.mlte.org

MLTNI - 02843 722158: admin@tollymoremc.com : www.tollymoremc.com

MLTS - 01479 861248 : smltb@aol.com : www.mltscotland.org

MLTW - 01690 720361 : info@mltw.org : www.mltw.org

The Climbing Wall Award - Frequently asked questions

What experience do I need to get the CWA?

- Before attending a training course candidates must have registered for the CWA, be aged 17 as an absolute minimum, climbed on 3 different walls on 15 occasions and have led climbs. One of the walls visited must be a major public venue.

For assessment candidates must be at least 18 and have completed a training course or gained exemption. They must have recorded a minimum of 30 visits to at least 3 different venues and assisted on at least 15 instructed sessions on two different walls, one of which must be a large public facility. A current First Aid Certificate is needed to validate all of our awards.

The School I work at has just had an indoor wall built; do the staff who are going to work on the facility need to do a CWA?

- No, we would suggest that school staff who are going to work on one venue probably only need to undertake some site specific training. Generally this will take the form of 6-8 hours training for up to 6 – 8 people and will allow staff with limited experience to undertake appropriate training rather than several staff having to gain the CWA.

I manage a small wall and need staff just to work specifically here; what qualification do they need?

- If the staff work exclusively at one wall, site specific training should be adequate; if however they are going to work on other walls in the future then the CWA is more appropriate. The CWA will expand the skills they have and therefore the quality they deliver for you.

I got 'signed off' two years ago to work at my local wall by a technical advisor. Do I need to do the whole CWA?

- Not necessarily, if you think you are suitably experienced you can go straight for the CWA assessment by applying for exemption from training. Application forms are available by e mail or post; please contact the relevant Mountain Leader Training Office.

I just want to work on an abseil tower; can I just do the abseil module?

- No, you must hold the CWA assessment before attending an Abseil module assessment, but some courses provide these concurrently.

Do I need a first aid certificate to get the CWA?

- Currently there is a requirement that you have at least an 8 hour first aid course completed by the time you do CWA assessment - some 'walls' may be outside and some way from immediate help so you can't assume that another first aider will be on hand all the time.

How can I gain consolidation experience of working with groups prior to CWA assessment?

- Placing a note on the appropriate Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA) forum is potentially a good way to seek such experience; you might also consider asking around at local climbing walls in your area. Some volunteer and youth services may also consider you as support staff. It is worth remembering that you may need to get a CRB check.

Is abseiling included in the Climbing Wall Award?

- The Climbing Wall Award covers bouldering and roped climbing supervised at ground level. The abseil module covers roped climbed and abseiling supervised from above. Training and assessment courses may combine the modules, or provide them separately.

What qualifications do I need to work on a mobile tower?

- Mobile towers don't fit clearly into either the SPA or the CWA, although holding either of these awards should be a distinct advantage and demonstrate that you have a clear overview of indoor / outdoor climbing situations. The competencies needed to manage a group are vastly different from those required to erect, manage and maintain machinery and apparatus! Therefore it is important that anyone working on mobile towers receives proper training and is familiar with the operator's guidelines for that type of structure, particularly the belay systems, as well as having a general awareness of safety procedures.

