



Mountain Leader Training

National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders



4th (Internet) Edition

Advice on good practice for anyone with a responsibility for climbing, hill walking and mountaineering related activities, and encompassing the principles of a safety management



National Guidelines for Walking and Climbing Leaders

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Mountain Leader Training Association

Developing and supporting climbing, walking and mountain leaders

What is the Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA)?

MLTA was established in 2005 with the aim of providing support and further training opportunities for Mountain Leader Training award holders. MLTA is a practical solution to maintaining continuing development and is based upon a philosophy of lifelong learning. Membership is open to climbing, walking and mountain leaders who hold or are working towards a national award at the stage of registration. The focus is at Climbing Wall Award (CWA), Single Pitch Award (SPA), Walking Group Leader (WGL) and Mountain Leader (ML) level.

Who can join?

Membership is open to leaders who hold or are registered for any national award of the UK's Mountain Training Boards. Members include outdoor instructors, leaders of voluntary and school groups as well as people working through the awards for personal achievement.

Membership benefits

- Let people find you for work - Freelance Instructor list
- Reduced premiums for professional liability insurance and other members' deals
- Develop your skills and experience with further training opportunities
- Solve your problems with specialist support and online resources
- Keep in touch at networking and social events and through the web forum

How to join

Join online once you have registered for one of the UK awards at www.mlta.co.uk



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Preface

Preface

Adventure activities can provide exciting, motivating and very real contexts for young people to develop their skills, awareness and understanding. Society has to balance the risks that young people face in these activities with the very real benefits of their experiences. Mountain Leader Training believes that properly managed risk activities help educate people to manage risk, and when guided by competent leaders, young people and adults can achieve a great deal both personally and socially in the group experience. However, the mountaineering community recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering carry a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should therefore be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

This booklet aims to assist individuals and organisations to ensure that these introductions to the outdoors are safe and enjoyable. Recent studies by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority help put the real risks into context by estimating that each year schoolchildren take part in seven to ten million days of adventure activities and the Scouts estimate that they have half a million members participating in these same activities. Set against this there is on average one death a year arising from these activities as well as a number of lesser accidents and incidents. Many of these incidents could and should have been avoided.

Clear standards have been set in this document to ensure that risks are tolerable and activities well managed. The ability to involve participants in these activities and so develop their levels of responsibility,

communication and awareness of others forms part of these standards. Leaders may also be able to develop positive attitudes and values, help the group reflect on experiences and so maximise any learning opportunities. Mountain Leader Training defines minimum safety and environmental standards but is equally committed to the development of best practice for leaders i.e. raising standards where these need to be raised and sharing new ideas. While it is clear that the majority of providers and leaders operate in a highly responsible and considerate way, there is, and always will be, scope for improvement.

The mountains and uplands of the United Kingdom and Ireland provide a wealth of opportunity for educational and recreational use. However, the use of these magnificent natural resources is not without potential hazard and risk. The volume of people using the hills, mountains and crags has grown over the years and continues to do so, while at the same time there have, unfortunately, been a number of incidents. Some of these have been serious, particularly those involving young people, and have resulted in tragic and sometimes unnecessary loss of life. Many of these incidents could and should have been avoided. While some of them were high in the mountains (the Edinburgh School group on Cairngorm in 1971 and the Scout fatality on Snowdon in 1999) others were during low level activities (the drowning of two Leeds schoolgirls while river walking in Stainforth Beck in 2001 and the drowning of one schoolboy in Glenridding Beck in 2003). This document aims to provide inclusive advice across the spectrum of walking and climbing activities, for leaders and their employers and managers.

These guidelines should not be used in isolation, but in conjunction with the guidance on safety and good practice provided by organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive and the relevant home nation education departments or organisational guidelines.

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Mountaineering Ireland (MI) and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS) welcome the work of Mountain Leader Training in promoting awareness of mountain safety and drawing attention to the various mountain training awards. Mountain Leader Training has prepared these guidelines for those in positions of responsibility and is in full agreement with the BMC, MI and the MCofS in emphasising that they are not necessarily intended to be applicable to recreational climbers, mountaineers or hill walkers enjoying their activity as equals in the traditional mountaineering club fashion. The informal sharing of experience and skills between walkers and climbers is a fundamental aspect of our sport and further guidance is available to clubs through the mountaineering councils.

Editor's Acknowledgements

This edition of the *National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders* has been developed from an original version produced in 1991. Following the canoeing tragedy at Lyme Bay there were significant developments in the guidance available to providers of adventure activities and this edition of the *National Guidelines* draws in particular on the HSE's *Guidance to the (Adventure Activities) Licensing Authority*. Mountain Leader Training has continued these developments and in the late nineties carried out a major consultation that led to the creation of the Walking Group Leader Scheme and most recently in the development of the Mountain Leader Training Association.

It was recognised that a framework underpinning the eight national mountaineering awards was required and a MLT working party developed this edition [2005] after lengthy consultation. The working party comprised: Trevor Fisher (Secretary of MLTNI and Director of Tollymore Mountain Centre), Allen Fyffe (Secretary of MLTS), Doug Jones (Chair of MLTUK), Andy Say (Executive Secretary of MLTE) and Dawson Stelfox (Mountaineering Council of Ireland). Additional comments have been supplied by Anne Vowles and

Pete Stacey (Association of Mountaineering Instructors), Marcus Bailie (Adventure Activities Licensing Authority), John Muston and Neil Wills (The Scout Association and Wiltshire Scouts), Libby Peter and George Reid.

John Cousins, Secretary of MLTUK, 2005

In 2008 Mountain Leader Training added the Climbing Wall Award to its portfolio of national qualifications; this will be followed in 2010 by the Climbing Wall Leading Award. The second edition of the *National Guidelines* was updated accordingly to produce the 2008 (Internet-published) edition which this new edition updates with the latest information incorporated.

Steve Long, Chief Officer of MLT, 2009

Mountain Leader Training

Mountain Leader Training is the awarding body for the IML, MIA and MIC awards. As the coordinator of all mountain training in the UK, MLT also collaborates with the collective four Home Nation Mountain Training Boards (MLTE, MLTS, MLTW and MLTNI) who deliver, collectively, the WGL, ML, ML (Winter), CWA, SPA and CWLA schemes across the United Kingdom

The four home nation training boards have more than seventy individual members, representing over forty user bodies that include the mountaineering councils and Ramblers Association, mountain rescue, voluntary youth bodies, the education sector, sports councils and a range of course providers.

MLT comprises two representatives from each of the four home nation boards and four representatives from the mountaineering councils. It also has observers from the equivalent mountain training board in the Republic of Ireland (Bord Oiliunt Sleibhe) and the British Association of Mountain Guides (responsible for the Guides Carnet). Three observers from the national mountain centres (Glenmore Lodge, Plas y Brenin and Tollymore) and two from the professional leader and instructor associations (The Association of Mountaineering Instructors - AMI and The British Association of International Mountain Leaders - BAIML) complete the representation. All of these organisations work closely together and this document is the synthesis of ideas developed by all of them.



1 Placing the Schemes in context

1.1 Integration

While there are many qualified leaders operating well within the remits of their awards there are many others who either do not possess a national award, or who consider themselves to be operating at the margins of what might be acceptable good practice or are unaware of the support available. This document is intended to help integrate local and organisation-based leader schemes, underpinned by the nationally recognised mountaineering qualifications. It also provides advice to individual leaders who may find themselves in non-standard situations.

1.2 Support for All

Mountain Leader Training (MLT) wishes to provide more support to the various local and organisational schemes that rely on internal validation procedures. The National Guidelines aim to assist organisations, be they large or small, whose leaders may have limited experience, to operate in less demanding terrain within a safety management system. It also identifies the management systems required for those progressing beyond a particular national award or who have yet to complete one.

Case Study 1: Managing a Corridor Route†

The Walna Scar track from Coniston to the Duddon Valley (SD 300976 to 233965) is a route that traverses the flanks of a mountainous area as it skirts the Old Man of Coniston and Dow Crag and goes up to the height of 606 metres. Whilst the land falling away to the south could well be classed as moorland it is only the track itself which separates this area from the mountains. It therefore falls outside the accepted terrain for a leader holding the WGL and is assumed to be an area requiring an ML Award. It may however be possible for a Walking Group Leader to work with groups along this route, within an appropriate safety management system.

A suitably qualified and experienced technical adviser (usually MIA, MIC or Guide) would be able to identify the terrain immediately adjacent to the route as appropriate for WGL and might determine that the route finding demands for keeping to the route were

not too high. It would be preferable for that adviser to have a current knowledge of the relevant MLT awards as this would ensure their understanding of the various competencies included in those awards. Such an adviser might be able to evaluate the Walna Scar route and declare it as acceptable for holders of WGL although they might well put provisos upon such things as group type and size, weather conditions or prior experience.

Another means by which the WGL holder may be introduced to work on this route would be through site-specific training whereby the technical adviser may well take potential leaders over the route to introduce them to the terrain, point out specific hazards and navigational decision points and may even assess their ability to cope with tasks en route. Such training and assessment would give the employer and the technical adviser a much greater degree of assurance about the capability of the WGL holders working on this route.

† Case study provided by Andy Say, Mountain Leader Training England

1.3 Minimising Duplication

Considerable integration has been achieved between the mountaineering awards. The National Guidelines are aimed particularly at integrating these schemes with various organisational validations. The aim of such a framework is to minimise duplication and enable individual leaders to be accredited for the training they receive during their career.

1.4 Competence

According to the Health and Safety Executive there are four ways to demonstrate the competence of leaders, namely: to hold the relevant national qualification, to hold an equivalent qualification, to have received appropriate in-house training or to be competent through experience (see p 14). MLT endorses this view recognising that national awards are the key components in such an approach.

1.5 Ten National Awards

There are currently ten established mountain related qualifications in the UK for leaders, instructors and guides (see 5.1). These awards are widely used by a diverse range of organisations and individuals and are the benchmark standards for mountaineering activities. Alongside their universal recognition by the mountaineering councils and training boards of the UK and Ireland they are recognised by the Health and Safety Executive and other government organisations. A number of these qualifications also have international recognition and applicability (see MLT website for further details).

1.6 Local Schemes

As well as using the national qualifications a number of local authorities, youth organisations and employers operate local or organisation-based accreditation schemes. These schemes are for the provision of skills needed to deal with specific restricted tasks, and the

accreditation tends to be site or area specific, restricted and non-transferable. Over the years Mountain Leader Training has worked closely with a number of such schemes, providing support and endorsement for them.

1.7 Other Schemes

There are other schemes of training including the Award in Basic Expedition Leadership (formerly known as BELA), internal military leadership programmes and a variety of locally administered programmes. These are outside the scope of this document.

1.8 Advice

Mountaineering activities range considerably: from short walks on local moorland to scrambling over long rocky ridges and from climbing on short man made walls to expeditions to the very highest summits. The ten national qualifications currently available span this activity, focusing on specific disciplines such as the Winter Mountain Leader. Because of the irregular nature of mountains the lines between each award may be blurred. Leaders or their managers who wish to clarify the remit of an award should seek advice from a suitable technical adviser (See 6.4 and Appendix II). This adviser may be able to provide appropriate further in-house training and validation to enable a wider range of activities. Where there is any doubt advisers should contact the relevant national MLT board.

1.9 The Water Margin

The other area that often requires additional support is the border between land and water-based activities. Mountain Leader Training has worked closely with the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, the British Canoe Union, the Department for Education and Skills and the Health and Safety Executive to produce various guidance notes. (See Appendix VII *Combined Water and Rock Activities* and *Group Safety at Water Margins*).

Case Study 2: The Guide Association Walking Scheme†

In late 1999 and early 2000 the Guide Association (now known as Girlguiding UK) spoke to MLTS about gaining approval for their walking scheme for leaders of Guide Association groups in Scotland. This was followed by the distribution of the scheme draft to a small working party of MLTS members for comment. After responding to this consultation and using the MLTS 'Local Accreditation Schemes' booklet there were several meetings with representatives of the Guide Association and MLTS. Although the initial scheme was robust and well constructed, a few suggestions were made and acted on. These discussions were greatly helped in that the Guide Association had a technical adviser who was also an MIC and MLTS Course Provider who was very familiar with the existing award schemes.

The scheme was given MLTS endorsement in September 2001. This approval was for a three-year

period after which the scheme was re-submitted to the Board. Should there have been any significant alterations to the scheme then this re-submission would have had to be sooner.

When these discussions started the Guide Association also approached the other home nation boards for approval. It was decided that other Home Nation Boards would comment on the scheme to the MLTS who would be the lead body for this matter. When MLTS granted approval the other home nation boards followed suit. This situation was rather different from other local schemes as it was valid UK-wide, while other approved schemes were usually for a restricted area as well as for an organisation. However, the Guide Association scheme was robust and had the back up of appropriately qualified and experienced technical advisers making this wider remit possible within the concept of a local scheme.

†Case study supplied by Allen Fyffe, Mountain Leader Training Scotland



2 The Assessment and Management of Risk

2.1 Duty of Care

Leaders owe a duty of care to others who are so closely and directly affected by their actions that they ought reasonably to have them in mind as being affected by those actions and/or advice. This duty of care is greater for leaders who work with young people or novices and may reduce when responsible for more experienced groups. In the latter case the group members are more able to take responsibility for their actions i.e. they can consent to participating in an activity from an informed point of view and the duty of care may be considered to be reciprocal.

2.2 Matching Objectives to Participants

From records of incidents and accidents it seems evident that many of them could and should have been avoided. Many occur as a direct result of poor planning and management and an inadequate appreciation of the risks involved, in particular the failure to assess objectively the needs of the individual participant in relation to the activity, choice of venue and prevailing conditions. Mountain Leader Training recognises the need to ensure that all those who are responsible for supply and delivery of activities must take account of the welfare of the people in their care.

2.3 Planning

It is strongly recommended that the following principles be adopted during the planning process:

Why? identify the reasons for undertaking an activity

Who? identify the group's or individual's specific needs, taking into account experience, age, ability and interest

- **What?** identify the type of activity and level of participation consistent with the established needs of the participants
- **Where?** identify and use appropriate venues that are suited to the established needs of the participants
- **When?** identify the appropriate time or occasion and maintain the flexibility of operation with regard to prevailing conditions, established needs and abilities of the participants
- **How?** after initial consideration of the above, and before making final arrangements, consideration should be given in detail to the way in which the activity is to be organised and executed, in order that the aims of the activity can be achieved and potential hazards identified and dealt with appropriately

2.4 Personal Responsibility

Challenge and adventure are never entirely free of risk. Learning to have regard for the safety and welfare of oneself and others is an aspect of the personal development of participants to which good instruction and leadership will make an important contribution. However, there must always be an acceptable framework of safety.

2.5 Experience and Familiarity

Awareness of danger and potential hazard is developed through experience. Leaders need to be able to anticipate the possible risks involved in using particular environments. Risks will be minimised if leaders are familiar with members of their group, their strengths, weaknesses, personalities and previous experience.

2.6 Volunteers

By tradition within the United Kingdom leaders providing an outdoor mountain-related experience are often drawn from the voluntary sector. Such leaders will not always have the support of an employing organisation. In such cases the principles of good practice contained within this document are equally valid, although it is recognised that in some circumstances aspects of the document will not be applicable. However, simply being a volunteer will not exclude any individual from meeting the requirements in terms of appropriate training and competencies commensurate with the task.

2.7 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a continuous process that should start before any activity takes place. Re-assessing the risks will be necessary with every change such as in the weather or itinerary or in the event of a particular incident. This re-assessment should also take account of the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals within the group.

Risk Assessment

An assessment of benefits versus risks is made as follows:

- Identifying hazards
- Deciding who might be harmed by them
- Comparing the likelihood of harm against the identified risk
- What safety measures need to be in place to reduce the risks to an acceptable level?
- Can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
- What steps can be taken in an emergency?
- Formally review the assessment from time to time

2.8 Responsibilities and Principles of a Safety Management System

The responsibilities within any safety management system can be divided between three groups: the provider, the leader and the participants (customers, parents or guardian).

2.8.1 The Provider Checklist

The provider should be responsible for ensuring that:

- The individuals or leaders are competent for the task and are deployed within their limitations
- An appropriate document detailing the organisation's policy on safety and procedures is understood by the leader involved
- Information about safety policy, procedure and practice is available to the participant (or parent or guardian in the case of minors) prior to commencement of the activity [†]

- Participants are informed of the qualifications and experience of the leaders deployed
- The ratio between participant and leader is such as to ensure adequate control and safe conduct of the activity
- The participant is assessed as being fit for the proposed activity, as far as is reasonably practicable
- All equipment used is safe, well maintained and appropriate for the purpose to which it will be put
- In the event of any serious incident or accident the organisation's accident reporting procedure is followed which may, if appropriate, involve informing the Health and Safety Executive
- Adequate insurance is provided
- The region or specific venue for any activity is appropriate to the group's needs, and the environment in which it will be carried out is appropriate

2.8.2 The Leader Checklist

The leader charged with the safe conduct of the party should be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the provider's or employer's safety policy, where applicable, is adhered to throughout (this is an obligation under the Health and Safety at Work Act)
- The operational safety and overall welfare of the participants in his/her charge
- Ensuring that they operate within their competence and in a manner appropriate to the participants' experience and ability
- Informing the provider or employer if the ratio of leader to participants is such that the safe conduct of the party is in question
- As far as is reasonably practicable, ensuring that the ability and health of participants is suited to the activity proposed. In such cases where doubt exists the leader should be free to apply discretion and amend the activity accordingly
- Ensuring that the equipment provided by the provider and any personal equipment used by participants is suitable for the task
- Providing participants with information appropriate to the activity concerned, together with adequate instruction
- Providing participants with appropriate information on access and environmental issues together with adequate guidance
- Ensuring that every effort is made to protect the environment being used
- Showing due regard for other users of this environment

- Drawing to the attention of participants relevant codes of practice, club structure, ethics and the role of relevant governing bodies as appropriate

2.8.3 Participants, Customers, Parents or Guardians Checklist

The participant, customer, parent or guardian should, as far as is reasonably practicable, take responsibility for ensuring:

- That the activity offered suits participants' needs, expectations and capabilities
- That participants' actions conform to any safety guidance given during the process of instruction or supervision

- That any distress or concern during, or resulting from, the activity is drawn to the immediate attention of the leader in charge
- That they are aware of the recognised risks and hazards associated with the activity and are prepared to accept them
- That the equipment and clothing used are suitable for the activity and worn as directed
- That due regard is given to care of the environment and other users, and that the relevant code of conduct for the activity or relevant to the particular environmental circumstances is adhered to

[†] Information should be made available to participants prior to the commencement of any activity. In the case of minors, parents or guardians should be informed and approval gained prior to any contract or booking.



3 Safety Procedures and Operational Guidance

3.1 Safety Procedures

It is good practice for the provider to prepare a clear statement outlining the safety policy to be utilised. This policy statement can then be made available to all user groups.

Such a statement should include:

- The training and qualifications of the leader (minimum standard to be employed)
- A clear statement on complaints procedures
- the position regarding insurance cover of the provider, leader and participant

3.2 Operational Guidance

The provider of service is responsible for the provision of operational guidance, which will be used by any employed leader.[†] Such operational guidance will be made available to leaders and such guidance should be understood and accepted by them prior to their taking part in any instruction or activity. Normally guidance of this nature will primarily be for the benefit of the leader and should be consistent with nationally accepted standards of good practice.

3.3 Flexible Guidelines

In providing guidelines, precise rules are not feasible since they may fail to cover every important aspect. It is, however, essential to provide clear statements of principle, which give a degree of flexibility to meet the often varying conditions.

3.4 Operational Guidelines

Operational guidelines should be based on a realistic assessment of the risks involved and should include the following considerations:[‡]

- the safety and welfare of the participant
- the issue and use of essential technical and safety equipment both for the leader and participant
- the planning and objective assessment regarding the leadership task
- the limitations (where appropriate) of the leader role
- a clear statement of the ratios between leader and participants relative to the type of activity and venue to be utilised
- risk assessment as outlined in a previous section

3.5 Insurance Guidance

Insurance must be considered for provider, leader and participant and may include:

- public liability
- employers' liability
- professional indemnity
- personal accident

[†] The term 'employed leader' is used in the widest sense

[‡] The above list is by no means exhaustive, and it will vary according to the task and size of the operation of the provider. However, if rules are imposed, they should be clear statements that cannot be confused with the more general guidance notes. Guidance notes by their very nature offer a degree of flexibility and interpretation by the leader.



4 Statements of Competence – Tailor-made or Off the Shelf?

4.1 Four Ways to Demonstrate Competence

According to the Health and Safety Executive there are four ways to demonstrate the competence of leaders. These are:

- to hold the relevant qualification
- to hold an equivalent qualification
- to have received appropriate in-house training
- to be competent through experience

Mountain Leader Training endorses this view, while emphasising that national awards are the key components in such an approach, i.e. making

judgements about levels of experience and delivering in-house training is best left to appropriately qualified and experienced individuals.

4.2 The Value of Continuing Experience

Whatever method is used to determine the leader's competence it must be supported by current, relevant experience. All MLT awards are logbook-based and are only valid when backed up by current logged experience. Leaders should ensure that they have appropriate experience for the people they are working with, for the terrain in which they are planning to operate and for the activities they plan to undertake.

Case Study 3: Local Scheme & Exemption from ML Training[†]

Myles Christie is a science teacher at Bangor Grammar School in Northern Ireland. He spends a large part of his time working with students, developing hill walking skills as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. As a teacher, Myles could take advantage of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) hill walking leader training. Over a number of years, he gained Level 1 and Level 2 within the scheme. This accredited him to lead groups throughout Northern Ireland within specific guidelines and within the management structure of the scheme.

Myles operated in this way for a number of years. During this time he developed his own personal skills, as well as his leadership and group management skills. In late 2001, he completed Level 3 of the SEELB hill walking scheme. He then applied to the MLTNI for exemption from ML training, and subsequently passed the ML assessment in April 2002.

Myles is one of a small number of people annually who complete the ML award in this way, through recognition of the SEELB scheme by the MLTNI.

[†] Case study supplied by Trevor Fisher, Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland

4.3 In-house Training

Any provider of activities contemplating some form of in-house training is encouraged to use the model in Appendix II. The site specific nature of most in-house schemes is the principal reason for selecting this approach. Limited experience and lack of time are also common reasons for considering in-house training and these will have to be balanced against an off the shelf solution that stays with the individual wherever they are employed. The other concern with in-house training is that the trainers or participants may be isolated from best practice and denied a national perspective. For these reasons it is essential that appropriate, nationally qualified staff deliver in-house training wherever possible.

Knowledge and experience run along a continuum while the standards of any national award are a single point on this line. Further training events and opportunities to review new initiatives are valuable components in the continuing development of any leader.

4.4 First Aid

First aid and incident management are essential skills for every leader and the ten national awards require a current first aid qualification. The minimum requirement for the CWA is a one day course or eight hours of instruction but for all other awards training must involve at least two full days or sixteen hours of instruction and include an element of assessment. Candidates are further expected to undertake such additional elements of first aid training as are consistent with their work in wild and remote country, including emergency assistance and evacuation techniques. It is the responsibility of award holders to evaluate their likely work and the type of situations that they can reasonably expect to encounter and to maintain current appropriate first aid training and qualifications.

4.5 Personal Competence Training

Apart from first aid training courses there are no personal proficiency awards in the UK that are essential components of any leader training scheme. The National Navigation Award Scheme has been developed through the British Orienteering Federation to provide training and assessment in personal navigation skills, which may be of real value to many

mountaineers. The National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme (NICAS) has been developed by the Association of British Climbing Walls Training Trust to promote climbing development and accredit individual achievement on artificial structures. There is also a wealth of high quality training available for individuals, delivered through the Mountaineering Councils, independent mountaineering instructors, guides and leaders and a wide range of outdoor centres. Individuals who have received training from mountaineering instructors or guides in particular are encouraged to refer to this training when applying for exemption from training for certain awards or to demonstrate their commitment to further training.

4.6 Age Limits

The minimum age to enter the Climbing Wall Award is seventeen (although assessment may not be undertaken until eighteen). The minimum age to enter any of the other national awards is eighteen, apart from Winter Mountain Leader Award which is 20; there is no upper age limit. While it is fully understood that youth organisations are in a position to approve junior leaders below 18 this will always be within a safety management structure where participants, terrain and expectations can be managed. Under-age candidates seeking to enter a national award are encouraged to record their activities and to expand their personal experience and the opportunities they have to assist groups. In this way they will have a flying start when they enter their chosen scheme.

4.7 Military Schemes

The military operate a range of leader training schemes designed specifically for their needs, and while they have a number of similarities to Mountain Leader Training schemes the two should not be confused. In some cases the military providers also have approval to deliver civilian training and assessment, and this integrated approach has, in recent years, improved the opportunities for some service personnel to operate outside of any military structure. Existing holders of military awards may be eligible for exemption from relevant civilian training courses (see 5.6) but will invariably have to register and take an appropriate assessment course if they wish to gain civilian recognition.

Case Study 4: Site Specific Endorsement by Technical Advisor

A secondary school in Leicestershire had received funding to improve sports facilities at the school. One of the elements of the new sports hall is to be a climbing wall. The head of PE at the school initially contacted MLT to register 6 of the school staff on to the CWA scheme. They were advised to look instead at the possibility of site specific training and accreditation based upon the guidance issued by MLT. The school employed an MIA with experience of the technical advisor work in climbing walls and they were able to give some input during the planning

stages on equipment and other matters. Subsequent to the construction of the wall the technical advisor drew up detailed operating procedures as a result of a risk assessment. All staff were trained in these procedures and what to do in the case of any problems; they were finally assessed as competent by the advisor and formally 'signed off' by them. On the advice of the advisor two of the staff who had a background in climbing also registered for the CWA and undertook a training course. One of the staff was able to successfully complete their CWA assessment within six months enabling pupils from the school to be taken to local commercial walls as progression from their regular weekly sessions.



5 Mountain Leader Training's Award Structure

5.1 Award Development

With the launch in 2001 of the Walking Group Leader scheme and, before that, agreement by all four home nation training boards to a unified ML scheme, Mountain Leader Training completed a harmonisation process that had taken almost ten years. In the early nineties the European Mountain Leader Award (now the International Mountain Leader award) was created, quickly followed by the Instructor scheme being split into the Mountaineering Instructor Award (summer) and the Mountaineering Instructor Certificate, which includes winter climbing and then a process of harmonisation for the various rock climbing supervisor schemes to create the Single Pitch Award. In 2008 the Climbing Wall Award was created and this is to be followed in 2010 by the Climbing Wall Leading Award.

5.2 Key Principles of the Ten National Awards

The ten national awards (CWA, SPA, CWLA, WGL, ML, ML(W), IML, MIA, MIC and BMG Guide) have a number of key principles that help underwrite the schemes and ensure a consistent approach to the development of leaders in the mountains.

5.3 Registration Costs

Candidates expect consistent quality of delivery and an equitable standard at assessment. They also rely on MLT to represent them, to develop leader training with the changing times and to maintain records of their training and assessment. It is for these reasons that in all schemes candidates pay a fee to register for each award and their providers pay a standard yearly fee plus a levy on each training or assessment course that they run.

5.4 The Need for Experience

Personal experience is a condition of entry for all of the national awards, along with a desire to lead others. In Southern Ireland there is a mandatory personal proficiency course that precedes mountain leader training and in the UK many providers deliver personal skills courses in all aspects of mountaineering. There is also a National Navigation Awards Scheme with strong links to the British Orienteering Federation and the Royal Institute of Navigation.

5.5 Trainees

The process of registration, even amongst the higher level awards, is a paper exercise and does not imply any particular level of competence. Training courses involve no formal assessment and should not be used as evidence of competence. Trainees can gain experience in a wide range of managed positions within organisations where the responsibility for their deployment lies with a suitably competent individual.

5.6 Exemption and the Fast Track to Awards

Exemption from training is possible for the entry level awards, although most people value any additional opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in the company of fellow leaders and their trainers. It would be exceptional but possible for a suitably experienced individual to gain the MIC in just under two years, but any such person would be wise to take each step one at a time.

National Awards in Walking and Climbing

Title	Awarding Body	Remit	Validity	Entry Requirements
BEL Award for Basic Expedition Leader	Sports Leader UK	Leadership of walking parties in lowland terrain	UK	Direct entry
WGL Walking Group Leader Award	MLTE MLTNI MLTS MLTW	Leadership of walking parties in non-mountainous hilly terrain known variously as upland, moor, bog, hill, fell or down.	UK	12 months walking experience, 20 hill walks to attend training course
ML Mountain Leader Award	MLTE MLTNI MLTS MLTW	Leadership of hill walking parties under summer conditions in all mountain regions.	UK (the award has the approval of the UIAA under its model standards for voluntary leaders scheme)	12 months walking experience, 20 quality mountain days to attend training course
ML(W) Winter Mountain Leader Award	MLTS	Leadership of hill walking parties under winter conditions	UK	The ML Award & 20 winter quality mountain days
IML International Mountain Leader Award	MLT	Leadership of trekking parties in all non-alpine terrain, including easy snow-covered terrain of a gentle, nordic type. IML's with additional assessor training are able to train, assess & advise on all aspects of WGL	International	The ML Award, 20 quality international summer mountain days & 20 quality UK or international winter mountain days
CWA Climbing Wall Award	MLTE MLTNI MLTS MLTW	Supervision of climbing on purpose-built walls and structures. An additional module is available for supervising abseiling and climbing on structures requiring top-access.	UK	6 months climbing wall experience, 15+ climbs on purpose built climbing walls or structures to attend training course
SPA Single Pitch Award	MLTE MLTNI MLTS MLTW	Supervision of single pitch rock climbing & abseiling	UK	12 months climbing experience, 15+ rock routes
CWLA Climbing Wall Leading Award	MLTE MLTNI MLTS MLTW	Teaching of lead climbing on purpose-built walls and structures.	UK	CWA or SPA award. 50 + indoor routes, 12 at French 6a. 20 sessions as an CWA or SPA
MIA Mountaineering Instructor Award (summer)	MLT	Instruction of mountaineering and rock climbing activities. Able to train, assess & advice on all aspects of UK mountaineering except in winter conditions.	(the award has the approval of the UIAA under its model standards for voluntary leaders scheme)	30+ VS multi-pitch routes, 20 post- ML quality mountain days in sole charge of a group.
MIC Mountaineering Instructor Certificate	MLT	Instruction of summer & winter mountaineering & rock and ice climbing. Able to train, assess & advise on all aspects of UK mountaineering	UK	The MIA, the ML(W) Award, 20 Grade II/III+ routes & 20 winter group leading days
Guide British Mountain Guide	BMG	Guiding and instruction of all mountaineering activities, including glaciated areas summer and winter. Trainees are deemed equivalent to MIA aspirants to MIC	International	UK and Alpine experience 50+ E1 5bs, 50 IV/Vs, 20+ major alpine summits (10 TD+), 30 days ski mountaineering (15 linked)

5.7 Assessment

There is no exemption from any of the assessment courses. MLT relies on highly experienced assessors to get the best results from leaders (approximately 75% of all candidates pass first time).

5.8 Continuing Personal Development

The awards are given primarily on the basis of technical and group management skills. These skills are verified at the time of assessment and continuing relevant experience is necessary to maintain them. Most of the awards have no formal re-validation process so it the responsibility of the individual award holder to keep themselves up to date in the areas in which they are involved. This is best achieved through a combination of further personal experience and attendance at relevant training courses. A logbook is provided to record experience before and after any assessment. Further training opportunities are available via the Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA see 5.9).

5.9 Mountain Leader Training Association

MLTA was established in 2005. It provides support and opportunities for continuing personal development (CPD)/ training for those working in the outdoors. Membership is open to climbing, walking and mountain leaders who hold or are working towards a national award (CWA, SPA, WGL and ML). The main focus of MLTA is to provide training and development opportunities after qualification and support through networking.

Membership benefits include a specially negotiated insurance deal; further training events and opportunities for lifelong learning; discounts from trade and retail partners; online resources and access to a lively web based forum.

5.10 Providers

Suitably qualified and experienced individuals and organisations who wish to organise and run training and assessment can obtain approval from the respective mountain training board. The boards will monitor these courses, ensuring parity of standards throughout the United Kingdom.

5.11 First Aid

All award holders must possess a valid first aid certificate, the standard and level of such certification being laid down for specific awards. However, some employers may feel that a higher level of certification may be required depending on the work being undertaken.

5.12 Age

Entry to all of the base level awards is open to anyone who is eighteen years of age or above, with the exception of the Climbing Wall Award which is open to anyone who is seventeen years of age or above.

5.13 Equity

Providers are encouraged to make provision for additional assistance to be given to candidates where required, although this must not compromise the overall standards required for a leader to be in full control of a hill walking or rock climbing group at all times.

5.14 Remit and Operating Limitations

The clarification of the specific remit and operating limitations of each award is defined in Appendix I and within the prospectus and syllabus of the respective award. Section 2.8 also outlines the respective responsibilities of the provider, the leader and the participant.

5.15 Management and Deployment of Award Holders

The responsibility for deployment and management of award holders and the judgement of the suitability of such individuals for other aspects of their employment lie with the employer or provider. Such deployment should take account of the recent experience and health of the award holder and include further training as necessary.

5.16 Self Employed Leaders

Holders of awards are sometimes self-employed and may offer their services directly to the public. In this case the leader has to assume the dual roles of award holder and manager.

5.17 Legislation

It is assumed that each organisation or provider will produce operational procedures to suit their specific needs as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1973 and, where appropriate, the Adventure Activity Licensing Regulations 1996. Organisations must also be mindful of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the associated Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

5.18 Further Advice

In making recommendations regarding the provision of instruction and assessment in respect of the schemes listed above, MLT is anxious that there be no misunderstanding of the remit or scope of such schemes. Advice on any aspect of the above schemes may be obtained from the relevant administrative agency.



6 Local, Site or Organisation Specific Schemes

6.1 Local Schemes

It has already been noted that working within an approved safety management structure allows individuals to work beyond the limits of their awards. Appendix II contains Mountain Leader Training's model for local, site or organisation specific schemes, which has been successfully applied to a number of organisations. Any provider who feels that national awards do not address all of their training needs is advised to consider this model before embarking on any in-house validation scheme. Mountain Leader Training would welcome discussion with any organisation considering a local, site or organisation specific scheme, both to provide advice and where appropriate a degree of endorsement and national recognition.

facility, with a clear chain of responsibility for upkeep of fixtures and fittings. All of the national MLT climbing awards (CWA, SPA, CWLA, MIA/C) include climbing walls as a working environment, and some authorities may choose to administer a local scheme of training and assessment (see 6.1).

It should be stressed that although the SPA and CWA deal with relatively simple climbing situations and many technical issues are very similar, however, they have very different syllabuses. As an example the emphasis within the SPA is on the use of natural protection, building safe anchors, crag etiquette and safety issues in the outdoor environment, whilst the CWA is aimed more towards the management of activities such as bouldering, coaching movement skills in what can be a busy and very noisy environment.

6.2 Recording Experience

Leaders within local, site or organisation specific schemes should be made aware of the national awards and encouraged to record their experience in a comparable format to the standard MLT logbooks. For some, it may even be appropriate to register for a national award, use the logbook within a local scheme and then go on to complete, for example, the Mountain Leader scheme.

6.3 Climbing Walls

For the purposes of this document, the term 'climbing walls' refers to structures that are purpose built for climbing activities. These may be sited indoors or outdoors and can vary enormously in scale and complexity. All should be maintained as a managed

6.4 Technical Advice

Anyone holding a national award is competent within the remit of that award at the time of passing the assessment and doesn't necessarily need additional advice, though they may take the opportunity to attend further training events. Technical advisers are more qualified and experienced individuals who can assist leaders in particular with regard to the remit of their award. For example, a Mountain Leader who is concerned about forecast wintry conditions should consult an MIA who has a Winter ML or an MIC or Guide for guidance on the boundary between winter and summer. Where an organisation is contemplating a local, site or organisation specific scheme then appointing a technical adviser will be a critical part of the process.



7 The Margins of Walking and Climbing

7.1 *The Name of the Game*

'Walking' and 'climbing' are well understood activities and even the Health and Safety Commission in their *Definitions of Activities*[†] can add very little to these terms. On the other hand 'mountaineering', which encompasses both walking and climbing, is sometimes seen as the preserve of an elite few rather than a term applied to most participants. These are semantic divisions within a well-defined range of activities.

7.2 *Other Sporting Activities*

The nearest neighbours to our activities are perhaps canoeing and caving as well as (in certain respects) gymnastics. The boundary between water and rock is one which has caused some confusion and has been the scene of several accidents in recent times including the multiple drownings in Switzerland in 2000 and in Stainforth Beck in 2001. Two very useful documents have emerged from these incidents, and Appendix VII provides further details.

7.3 *Summer and Winter*

Mountain Leader Training has a seasonal approach to hazards and the skills needed to deal with them. Several of the awards use the terms summer and

winter and are defined as: winter – when winter conditions, including snow and ice prevail or are forecast. This cannot be defined by a portion of the year: summer – any conditions not covered under winter.

7.4 *Indoor Activities*

There is a huge range of different venues and activities taking place indoors with some venues incorporating 'equipment' that would not appear out of place on a high ropes course. MLT has always supported the delivery of site specific training on indoor walls by an appropriately qualified person which is MIA or above. At the other end of the scale larger multi activity centres may need a range of appropriately qualified advisors with expert knowledge that goes far beyond the range of the MIA/MIC/BMG and to the realm of the structural engineer. See also 6.3 for current information on climbing walls and also MLTE's Climbing Wall Guidance Notes which is available as a download.

[†] HSC Guidance to the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996, ISBN 0-7176-1160-4



Appendix 1 National Awards

Part 1 Qualifications Awarded by Mountain Leader Training

For further details of these awards contact MLT.

i. Walking Group Leader Award - WGL

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required to lead walking groups in summer conditions in non-mountainous hilly terrain, known variously as upland, moor, bog, hill, fell or down. The award is administered by the four home nation Mountain Leader Training boards and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Minimum age at registration is 18. Prior to registration candidates must have twelve months hill walking experience and have a genuine interest in leading groups. Candidates attend a minimum of three days training and three days of assessment (thirty hours contact time per course). The courses examine safe group management, navigation, environmental responsibilities, personal walking skills, the overnight experience, emergency procedures and related activities. Candidates should hold a current first aid certificate at the time of assessment.

ii. Mountain Leader Award - ML

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required to lead walking groups in summer conditions in the mountains. The award is administered by the four home nation Mountain Leader Training boards and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Minimum age at registration is 18. Prior to registration candidates must have twelve months mountain walking

experience and have a genuine interest in leading groups. Before attending training candidates must have a minimum of 20 quality mountain walking days. Candidates attend a minimum of six days training and five days of assessment (sixty hours contact time per course). The courses examine safe group management, navigation, environmental responsibilities, personal walking skills, emergency procedures, route finding and dealing with steep ground, expedition skills and related activities. Candidates should hold a current first aid certificate at the time of assessment.

iii. Winter Mountain Leader Award - ML(W)

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required for the leadership of hill walking parties in winter conditions. The award is administered by Mountain Leader Training Scotland and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Minimum age at registration is 20. Prior to registration candidates must hold the Mountain Leader Award and have undertaken a minimum of twenty winter quality mountain days in at least three mountain areas of the United Kingdom. Candidates attend a minimum of six days of training and five days of assessment. The courses examine snow and avalanche awareness, snow holes and emergency shelters, ice axe and crampon skills, security on steep ground, cold weather injuries, navigation, winter weather and expedition skills. Candidates should hold a current first aid certificate at the time of assessment. For further details contact MLTS.

iv. International Mountain Leader Award - IML

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required to be competent to take trekking parties to all mountain areas **except** on glaciers and where the techniques or equipment of alpinism are required. The international mountain leader can also operate on easy snow-covered terrain, providing it is of a gentle, nordic type in the “middle” mountains. The award is administered by Mountain Leader Training UK and is valid throughout the European Community and recognised internationally. Prior to registration candidates must hold the Mountain Leader Award and have logged twenty summer international quality mountain days and twenty winter quality days (UK or overseas). Candidates attend five days of training, which includes a half-day speed navigation test, and four days of assessment in summer conditions. They also attend an IML winter training course and complete five days of winter assessment.

v. Climbing Wall Award - CWA

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required to supervise climbers on purpose-built climbing walls and structures. The award is administered by the four home nation Mountain Leader Training boards and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Minimum age at registration is seventeen but the minimum age at assessment is 18. Prior to training candidates must have six months climbing experience and have climbed at three different walls on at least fifteen occasions in all – this must include one *major* wall and should include lead climbing. Candidates attend a minimum of two days training (twelve hours contact time) and one day of assessment (six hours contact time). The courses examine safe group management, facility etiquette, personal climbing skills, emergency procedures and related activities. Before assessment candidates should have led a minimum of forty climbs, assisted with at least 15 sessions and should hold a current first aid certificate at the time of assessment. An additional module is available for abseiling and walls requiring top access. A CWA pass is required before attending an assessment for this module as well as suitable consolidation experience.

vi. Single Pitch Award - SPA

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required to supervise climbers on single pitch crags and climbing walls. The award is administered by the four home nation Mountain Leader Training boards and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Minimum age at registration is 18. Prior to registration candidates must have twelve months climbing experience and have led a minimum of fifteen outdoor routes of any grade, where protection is leader placed. Candidates attend a minimum of two days training and two days of assessment (twenty hours contact time per course). The courses examine safe group management, crag etiquette, environmental responsibilities, personal climbing skills, emergency procedures and related activities. Candidates should hold a current first aid certificate at the time of assessment.

vii. Climbing Wall Leading Award - CWLA

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required to teach lead climbing on purpose-built climbing walls and structures. The award is administered by the four home nation Mountain Leader Training boards and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. Minimum age at registration is eighteen. Prior to registration candidates should hold the CWA or SPA award and have logged at least 20 sessions as an award holder. Candidates should have experience of leading 50 indoor routes on 3 different walls at least 25% which should be at French 6a. Candidates attend a training course of 8 hours contact time. Before assessment candidates should assist or observe at least 5 lead climbing teaching sessions and log a further 50 led indoor routes with at least 25 at French 6a. Candidates will attend an assessment of 6 hours contact time. Candidates should hold a current first aid certificate at the time of assessment.

viii. Mountaineering Instructor Award (summer) - MIA

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required for instruction of mountaineering, including all aspects of rock climbing. The award is administered by Mountain Leader Training UK and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. There is an opportunity for mountaineering instructors to work overseas; subject to further training, a qualifying period of 2 years and within a set of terrain-specific definitions. For further information contact the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI). Prior to registration candidates should hold the Mountain Leader Award. Registration requirements include extensive multi-pitch rock climbing experience at VS 4c or above and substantial group leading experience since gaining the ML award. Candidates attend nine days of training and five days of assessment. Personal climbing skills, teaching of leading, improvised rescue and mountain scrambling are covered at both training and assessment and candidates should hold a current first aid certificate.

ix. Mountaineering Instructor Certificate (MIC)

This scheme trains and assesses people in the skills required for instruction of mountaineering, both summer and winter, including snow, ice and rock climbing. The award is administered by Mountain Leader Training UK and is valid throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. There is an opportunity for mountaineering instructors to work overseas; subject to further training, a qualifying period of 2 years and within a set of terrain-specific definitions. For further information contact the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI). Prior to registration candidates should hold the ML(W) and MIA Awards. Registration requirements include extensive winter climbing experience at Grade III or above and substantial group leading experience since gaining the ML(W) award. Candidates attend five days of training and four days of assessment. Personal winter climbing skills, teaching of winter climbing and general mountaineering skills are covered and candidates should hold a current first aid certificate.

Part 2 Qualifications Awarded by Other Bodies

x. IFMGA Mountain Guide

This scheme trains and assesses experienced people in the skills required for the provision of instruction and guiding services in climbing, skiing and mountaineering on rock, ice and snow in all conditions and all seasons to the standards set by the British Association of Mountain Guides (BMG) and the International Federation of Mountain Guide Associations (IFMGA). The award is administered by the BMG and is valid worldwide. Candidates should register with the BMG and have gained substantial experience of United Kingdom and alpine mountaineering. Registration requirements for this scheme are broad and include fifty multi-pitch rock climbs at E1 5b or above, fifty winter climbs of which twenty should be at grade V, alpine experience over a minimum period of four years to include a minimum of twenty big routes of which ten should be TD or above and skiing experience that includes thirty listed days of ski mountaineering experience in glaciated alpine terrain, of which at least fifteen days must be linked days on recognised tours. For further details contact the BMG.

Trainee members of the BMG who have successfully completed the summer assessment are equivalent to MIAs while Aspirant Guides (individuals who have successfully completed the winter assessment) are equivalent to MICs. Candidates are currently required to attend a minimum of three days of induction, thirty three days of training and twenty four days of assessment.

xi. Award in Basic Expedition Leadership (ABEL)

This scheme trains and assesses leaders in the skills required to lead and teach basic skills to parties operating in summer conditions on well-defined paths and tracks which can be followed without difficulty in poor visibility and with no commitment or necessity to complete a planned route. The acceptable terrain for this award is low-lying rural countryside, farmland, valleys or forest and gentle to moderate rolling terrain with no steep slopes. It excludes mountains, high hills, high level moorland, extensive low-level open moorland and any areas which are more than thirty minutes nominal walking time from a road or refuge. The scheme is administered by Sports Leader UK.

Case Study 5: Managing Trainee Mountaineering Instructors[†]

At Plas y Brenin National Mountain Centre a large number of talented climbers and teachers are employed to deliver a wide range of climbing courses. Each year a small number of instructors progressing through their Mountaineering Instructor Award work on rock climbing courses. The Centre manages the use of trainees by:

- *Selecting talented, experienced climbers with appropriate training*
- *Induction to the working environment and ethos of Plas y Brenin*
- *Using an experienced mentor to give further practical training at suitable venues to be used for climbing courses*

- *Providing clear additional written guidance on best practice used by the instructors at the Centre*
- *Deploying the trainees on courses where an experienced mountain guide or mountaineering instructor (i.e. experienced and qualified member of staff) directs a course and supervises the choice of venues and routes*
- *Providing additional support with practical observation and feedback from other senior members of staff*
- *This process is coordinated and managed by a senior member of staff (e.g. Director of Training) and this process is documented.*

There are other organisations managing trainee mountaineering instructors and trainee mountain leaders in much the same way.

[†] Case Study supplied by Martin Doyle, Mountain Training Trust



Appendix II Mountain Leader Training's Model for Local, Site or Organisation Specific Schemes

i. Introduction

Some organisations conduct mountaineering activities within limited geographical areas or in situations in which hazards and difficulties can be easily identified and avoided or minimised. In such circumstances the full range and standard of CWA, SPA, CWLA, WGL or ML skills may not be required. Staff with more limited mountaineering or climbing experience and lesser skills may be trained to supervise groups. Provided certain criteria are met, the deployment of staff in such a capacity may be entirely satisfactory.

ii. Scope of Local Schemes

It should be appreciated that local schemes are only suitable for use by organisations and not by individuals. Every organisation will have different reasons for using the mountain or mountain environment as a training medium, have different resources and be organised differently. Therefore, whilst the principles for the construction of local schemes may be the same, it is unlikely that any two schemes will be designed and replicated exactly. For example, a scheme operated by a single location holiday company will be very different from that operated by a UK-wide voluntary youth organisation.

It is this fact that prevents the design of a single scheme applicable to any organisation and prevents Mountain Leader Training from designing schemes specifically for individual organisations. It also means that an individual trained and accredited in one organisation is likely to require additional training and briefings if moving to work within another scheme. The lack of skills and judgement of leaders who are not qualified is compensated for, and

overcome by, corporate training, safety systems and collective responsibility. However, if an individual works within a number of schemes that individual is likely to build up a level of experience that will enable good progress through the appropriate scheme.

iii. Links to Mountain Leader Training

Mountain Leader Training believes that the national awards represent the minimum safe standards for independent leadership of groups in the UK. The achievement of these awards should be an aspiration for all those who have an interest in leading groups.

Therefore local schemes should encourage this aspiration and should reflect and relate to National Governing Body award standards and processes. Operators of such schemes should be fully committed to the national schemes as the primary means of training provision and should encourage staff into and through these schemes.

Wherever possible local training schemes should be fully integrated with the national schemes in order to avoid duplication and deliver training in a coordinated way. Mountain Leader Training is prepared to consider alternative formats to its existing training courses; this might include a more extended timescale.

iv. Aim

The aim of this document is to provide guidance and a framework on which organisations can design, construct and operate local, or site, or organisation specific supervisor accreditation schemes, which Mountain Leader Training is keen to support.

v. Scheme Design

Each organisation should complete a series of stages in preparing its scheme. This comprises a thorough examination of the activities that are planned to be conducted, the aims of the activities, where they are to take place, the hazards involved, the training objectives, experience requirements and a comparison with the existing Mountain Leader, Single Pitch, Walking Group Leader or Climbing Wall schemes.

v.i. Define Aim

Each organisation will have its own reasons for using the mountain or crag or climbing environment, which could include educational, recreational and developmental aims. Each operator of a local scheme must be clear about what it is trying to achieve with its clients and thus have clear aims for its scheme. Until the aim is clear it is not possible to determine where the training will take place, conduct a risk assessment, determine the skills required by the supervisors or construct a local scheme.

v.ii. Determine Area to be Used

Geographical or venue limits must be defined clearly and may include seasonal and altitudinal restrictions. This definition will have a considerable impact on the risk assessment and the training objectives.

v.iii. Conduct Risk Assessment

Having determined exactly what activities are to be conducted (including facilities and equipment available) and their geographical limits a technical expert will then be able to conduct a risk assessment.

v.iv. List Training Objectives/Syllabus

The technical expert should list in detail the practical skills, including group management skills, required by the supervisor (the syllabus).

v.v. Determine Experience Requirements

Many practical skills depend on the individual's relevant experience. The technical expert should determine such experience requirements.

v.vi. Comparison with the National Awards

Once the above steps have been completed the proposed scheme, including the skills and experience judged necessary, should be compared to those of the national schemes. Such a comparison may reveal that it would be preferable to conduct National Governing Body training courses, albeit over an extended period, rather than local scheme courses.

vi. Scheme Management

Only after considering the scheme design will the organisation be able to determine the necessary competencies required to manage a local scheme. From the experience requirements and training objectives will stem the training, assessment and management requirements. It will also allow the determination of entry requirements for scheme candidates.

The scheme should be documented to:

- vi.i. Demonstrate that the organisation creates a culture of safety
- vi.ii. State the system for authorising activities
- vi.iii. State the system to review leader or supervisor performance and feedback
- vi.iv. Determine what level of first aid training is required
- vi.v. Determine equipment requirements and make provision for appropriate equipment maintenance
- vi.vi. State who is responsible for training leaders or supervisors.
- vi.vii. State the personal level of competence of the trainers of leaders or supervisors
- vi.viii. State the standards of competence of the leaders or supervisors
- vi.ix. State the standards of assessors of leaders or supervisors

vii. Technical Advice

Each organisation should appoint a competent person (technical expert) to advise on safety relevant to the activities being undertaken and on the training of unqualified supervisors. For mountaineering activities the appropriate qualification for a person of such competence is MIA, MIC or Guide.

Where in-house training is the means by which the level of competence is assured, a technical expert should specify the training syllabus and assess the competence of trained staff. The assessor should, preferably, not be the same person as the trainer.

viii. Scheme Approval

Draft schemes should be submitted to the appropriate home nation Mountain Leader Training board for consideration at their quarterly meetings. Should they feel that any element of a scheme requires further explanation or appears unsatisfactory then approval will be withheld and the scheme referred back to the originator for resolution. Approval would be probationary until a member of Mountain Leader Training's technical staff had observed and moderated the scheme.

ix. Non-technical Skills

Each organisation will need to determine which non-technical skills need to be assessed. In all cases group awareness and group management skills are fundamental to safe provision and will need to be considered. Other organisations, because of their own specific needs, may identify other relevant issues that need to be assessed.



Appendix III Provider Approval Mechanism

The home nation boards of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are the administrative bodies that oversee the provision of the leadership qualification offered in the UK. They are not themselves the providers of the training and assessment courses that lead to those qualifications. All of the boards have a similar system for the granting of approval to providers to run those courses. In all cases it is the full board meeting that approves the application for provider status after careful consideration of the merits of the applications. All of the boards are looking for the same criteria to ensure quality of provision.

i. Relevant qualifications

A lead person (the Director) will be required to hold as a minimum the following qualifications: MIA to run CWA, SPA and CWLA courses, MIA plus ML(W) to run ML training courses, MIC to run ML assessment courses and MIA plus ML(W) or IML plus ML(W) to run WGL courses. These qualifications give assurance as to the skills trained and assessed and also testify to the all-round experience and competence of the person concerned. Often consideration will be given to the qualities of any support staff nominated in the application.

ii. Experience

All of the boards require that applicants should have a breadth of experience in working on Mountain Leader Training courses before becoming a provider in their own right. This experience should be primarily in the scheme(s) being applied for and ideally should demonstrate work with a variety of existing providers.

iii. Understanding

An application will include a sample programme and details of facilities and venues to be used. The boards will look for an understanding of the ways in which the relevant syllabuses might be covered using a suitable format and also the provision of suitable accommodation based in appropriate terrain for the schemes concerned.

iv.. Viability

The boards will seek to ensure that the provider status will be a long-term provision thus consolidating experience and allowing for continuity as well as ensuring coherent provision for candidates. The relationship of provider and board is an ongoing one and there should be regular communication in the form of newsletters to the provider alerting them to any changes and updates. Provider staff are also required to attend further training and information workshops run by the boards on a regular basis.

Providers will be subject to regular moderation visits from board staff; required to submit details of planned courses and expected to submit accurate and timely reports of all courses run to the relevant board.

MLT administers the Instructor Awards of MIA and MIC as well as the IML and makes this provision through the three National Mountain Training centres of Plas y Brenin, Glenmore Lodge and Tollymore Mountain Centre.

Appendix IV Glossary

AALA	Adventure Activities Licensing Authority
Approval	Mountain Leader Training grants approval, on a yearly basis, to providers of its training and assessment courses. For details see Appendix III or contact Mountain Leader Training
Assessment	In mountaineering the assessment of any individual's competence is carried out by observation and questioning of leaders in realistic, practical situations and supported by written testing and log-book based reviews of prior training and experience
Assistant	Leaders may choose to operate with the assistance of another responsible adult (see 5.5 Trainees)
Award	Leader or instructor qualification, which demonstrate that an individual, at the time of their assessment, was competent to the required level. All awards rely on personalised log books to record the continuing experience of the leader
Carnet	A certificate of competence issued to members of British Association of Mountain Guides and British Association of International Mountain Leaders
Certificate	An instructor qualification (MIC) that is issued on completion of four separate training and assessment programmes
Coach	A generic sporting term for the role taken by any leader, instructor or guide in mountaineering activities. The term is sometimes applied to performance-enhancing rock climbing instruction, particularly when it is delivered at a climbing wall or similar defined environment
Hazard	means anything that can cause harm
Guide	In mountaineering terms this is not only the title of one of the national awards (British Mountain Guide) but is also used to describe a style of leadership that emphasises client care
Instructor	The title of two national awards (Mountaineering Instructor Award and Mountaineering Instructor Certificate) and a generic term for any group instructor/leader. It is often used to describe a style of leadership that emphasises learning and the development of skills and knowledge
Leader	In mountaineering this is not only the title of four of the national awards (Walking Group Leader, Mountain Leader, Winter Mountain Leader and International Mountain Leader) but is also used as a generic title to describe anyone in a position of responsibility
Professional	Someone who behaves in a thorough and conscientious manner, or someone who is paid for their services, or someone who is bound by a code of conduct and is overseen by a professional association
Provider	The individuals or organisation approved by Mountain Leader Training to deliver its training and assessment courses or a person who is required to hold a licence under the Adventure Activities Licensing Scheme
Remote Supervision	Sharing responsibility with the members of a walking group so that the leader supervises activities at a distance
Risk	The chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by a hazard
Single Pitch	A climb that is less than one rope length and is completed without the need for intermediate stances
Supervisor	As well as a generic term for a manager who oversees other people it is sometimes used in single pitch rock climbing as the term for a group leader
Technical Adviser	A competent person that provides advice to leaders and organisations, based on their experience, training, qualifications and their knowledge of local issues, relevant groups and the individuals involved
Validation	In mountaineering this term is often used within organisations to denote an internal approval mechanism for leaders

Appendix V References

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Peter L (reprinted 2008) *Rock Climbing Essential Skills and Techniques. The official handbook of the Mountaineering Instructor and Single Pitch Award schemes*. MLTUK

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Thomas M (1995) *Weather for Walkers and Climbers*. Allan Sutton Publishing Ltd

Useful Websites:

Mountain Leader Training: www.mltuk.org

Mountain Leader Training England: www.mlte.org

Mountain Leader Training Scotland: www.mltscotland.org

Mountain Leader Training Wales: www.mltw.org

Adventure Activities Licensing Authority: www.aals.org.uk

Adventure Industry Activity Committee: www.ccpr.org.uk

Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge: www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk

Association of Mountaineering Instructors: www.ami.org.uk

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres: www.ahoec.org

British Association of International Mountain Leaders: www.baiml.org

British Mountaineering Council: www.thebmc.co.uk

British Mountain Guides: www.bmg.org.uk

Countryside Council for Wales: www.ccw.gov.uk

Countryside Access and Activities Network for Northern Ireland: www.countrysidecreation.com

DFES Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: www.teachernet.gov.uk/visits

Emergency Response Publications: www.emergencyresponse.co.uk

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: www.fco.gov.uk

Glenmore Lodge: www.glenmorelodge.org.uk

Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk

Mountaineering Council of Scotland: www.mcofs.org.uk

Mountaineering Ireland: www.mountaineering.ie

Mountain Rescue Committee for England and Wales: www.mountainrescue.org.uk

Mountain Leader Training Association: www.mlta.co.uk

National Navigation Award Scheme: www.nnas.org.uk

Plas y Brenin: www.pyb.co.uk

RSPB: www.rspb.org.uk

Scottish National Heritage: www.snh.gov.uk

Tollymore Mountain Centre: www.tollymore.com

Weather/Met Office: www.met-office.gov.uk/weather/uk

Weather/Wales: www.mountainweatherwales.org

Weather: www.mwis.org.uk

Appendix VI Useful contacts

Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee
Burwood House, 14-16 Caxton St, London SW14 0QT
0207 79763900

www.ccpr.org.uk/partners/AAIAC/About+AAIAC.htm

Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS)
17 Lambourne Crescent, Cardiff Business Park, Llanishen,
Cardiff, CF14 5GF. 029 2075 5715. www.aals.org.uk

Association for Physical Education (AfPE)
Building 25, London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AQ
0118 3786240. www.afpe.org.uk

Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC)
c/o NAHT, 1 Heath Square, Boltro Road, Haywards Heath,
West Sussex, RH16 1BL. 01444 472476. www.ahoec.org

Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ES. 01690
720123. www.ami.org.uk

British Activity Holiday Association (BAHA)
BAHA, The Hollies, Oak Bank Lane, Hoole Village, Chester,
CH2 4ER. 01244 301342. www.baha.org.uk

British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, LL24 0ES. 01690 720272.
www.baiml.org

British Association of Mountain Guides (BMG)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, LL24 0ES. 01690 720386.
www.bmg.org.uk

British Canoe Union HQ (BCU) (also the offices for Canoe
England)
18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham, NG13 8AP. 0845
370 9500. www.bcu.org.uk

British Mountaineering Council (BMC)
177-179 Burton Rd, Manchester M20 2BB. 0161 445 6111.
www.thebmc.co.uk

The Environment Agency
National Customer Contact Centre, PO Box 544, Rotherham,
S60 1BY. 08708 506506. www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Field Studies Council (FSC)
Montford Bridge, Preston Montford, Shrewsbury, Shropshire,
SY4 1HW. 0845 3454071 / 01743 852100. www.field-studies-council.org

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Information Services
Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly, CF83 3GG. 08701
545500. www.hse.gov.uk

Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL)
Warwick Mill Business Centre, Warwick Bridge, Carlise,
Cumbria, CA4 8RR. 01228 564580. www.outdoor-learning.org

Lifesavers The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) UK
River House, High Street, Broom, Warwickshire, B50 4HN.
01789 773994. www.lifesavers.org.uk

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
Spring Place, 105 Commercial Road, Southampton, SO15
1EG. 02380 329100 www.mcga.gov.uk

Mountain Leader Training England (MLTE)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, LL24 0ES. 01690 720314.
www.mlte.org

Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland (MLTNI)
Tollymore MC, Bryansford. Newcastle, BT33 0PT. 02843
722158.
www.mountaineering.ie/trainingandsafety/viewdetails.asp?ID=19

Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS)
Glenmore, Aviemore, Inverness-shire PH22 1QU. 01479
861248. www.mltsotland.org

Mountain Leader Training (MLT)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, LL24 0ES. 01690 720272.
www.mltuk.org

Mountain Leader Training Wales (MLTW)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, LL24 0ES. 01690 720361.
www.mltw.org

Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI)
Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin
12. Ireland
+353 1 625 1115. www.mountaineering.ie

Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS)
The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth PH1 5QP. 01738
493942. www.mcofs.org.uk

National Association of Field Studies Officers
Stibbington Centre, Stibbington, Peterborough,
Cambridgeshire, PE8 6LP. 01780 782386.
www.nafso.org.uk

National Navigation Award Scheme (NNAS)
NNAS Office, 33 Stirling Enterprise Park, Springbank Road,
Stirling. FK7 7RP. 01786 451307. www.nnas.org.uk

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
83 Piccadilly, London, W1J 8QA. 020 7509 5555.
www.qca.org.uk

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)
West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ. 0845 122 6999.
www.rnli.org.uk

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B5 7ST.
0121 248 2000. www.rospace.com

Royal Yachting Association (RYA)
RYA House, Ensign Way, Hamble, Southampton, SO31 4YA.
0845 345 0400. www.rya.org.uk

Sports Leader UK (SLUK)
23-25 Linford Forum, Rockingham Drive, Linford Wood, Milton
Keynes, MK14 6LY. 01908 689180. www.sportsleaders.org

Appendix VII a

Combined Water/Rock Activities - Safety Check

Introduction

This guidance sets out what is considered by the Health and Safety Commission's Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee (AAA) to be good practice for the provision of combined water/rock activities and draws from the Adventure Activity Licensing Services Collective Interpretations.

Combined water/rock activities are activities where hazards associated with a rock environment may at times combine or alternate with those of a water environment. There are a number of different names and definitions used to describe the range of combined water and rock activities including:

- Sea-level traversing, (primarily a dry rock climbing activity and sometimes requiring the use of ropes and other rock-climbing equipment);
- Coasteering (usually a wet activity often involving swimming and/or jumping from a height into water as an integral part);
- Canyoning (usually wet. It traditionally involves the descent of a steep water course and sometimes involves technical rope work);
- adventure swimming (another name for coasteering or a non-technical variation of canyoning);
- Gorge walks, ghyll scrambles or scrambles, (can be wet, dry or alternating);
- River running (deliberately swimming down white water rapids)

This list is not exhaustive. This guidance provides generic information that can be applied to most situations involving combined water/rock activities.

Risk Assessment and Accident Prevention

Under health and safety legislation activity providers have a duty to ensure the health and safety of those who participate in their activities, i.e. group leaders and clients. They also have a duty to ensure that no one else is harmed as a result of their activities, i.e. non-participating members of the public.

As part of this duty they must ensure that a risk assessment which covers those risks that are reasonably foreseeable is undertaken by a competent person. This includes assessing foreseeable changes and planning for contingencies arising from them. The AAA guidance *Adventure Activities Centres: Five Steps to Risk Assessment* will help providers develop their risk assessments.

As there are so many different factors to consider each time an activity takes place, providers will need to determine what the site specific hazards are at any one time including the hazards associated with the route to and from the venue where the activity is

taking place. However, when producing a general risk assessment for combined water/rock activities, providers may find it useful to assure themselves that the following issues have been considered:

Impact with a solid object

- rock falling from above;
- falling or slipping on to rock, etc. below;
- jumping/ falling onto submerged rock;
- jumping from a height into water;
- being swept or smashed against something solid.

Drowning

- entrapment under water;
- repeated submersion in stopper waves or sea swell;
- suddenly rising water, e.g. freak waves, flash floods, dam releases;
- slowly rising water, e.g. trapped by rising tides or rising river levels;
- falling into water and/or being swept away;
- sudden immersion (dry/secondary drowning)

Hypothermia

- inadequate personal clothing or equipment during or after the activity;
- submersion, e.g. being swept out to sea

Controlling the Hazards

Control measures could be thought of in three contexts:

1. Where there is no (realistically) foreseeable possibility of a participant ending up in the water.
2. Where participants MAY end up in the water.
3. Where participants WILL end up in the water.

It would be appropriate, in cases where participants MAY end up in the water to apply the precautionary principle, and control measures (and test them accordingly) as though participants WILL end up in the water.

Group leader competence

One of the keys to ensuring the safety of participants during an activity is the competence of the group leader. In order to ensure that group leaders have the necessary competencies, activity providers need to put in place a system to identify and verify the required competence for each venue. The risk assessment will help identify the skills, knowledge and competencies needed for group leaders at each venue. They will probably include:

- climbing and other rock activities
- characteristics of water, i.e. surf, tides, currents and river flows
- site-specific hazards
- leading a group, including identifying the competencies within the group

- instruction techniques
- communication skills
- life saving
- rescue and emergency techniques
- first aid
- the equipment needed, including emergency equipment
- weather or sea conditions

One of the key competencies any group leader needs to have is the ability to know when it would be inappropriate to allow the activity to take place or when it is too dangerous to continue.

An induction process is likely to be required, i.e. accompanying someone who knows what they are doing, and learning from them. This would need to address, amongst other things, control measures for the hazards and risks identified above. It must be clear who is to conduct this induction, what it covers, what form it takes, etc. An induction checklist will help to ensure consistency. Local knowledge is likely to be one of the major safety factors in the delivery of these activities.

In order to ensure that group leaders acquire and maintain their skills a programme of training, which includes site specific training, will be needed. This will often include training at the venues and ideally should include at least some practical incident and accident scenarios and responses. Once acquired these skills should be tested on a regular basis, defined by the frequency of the activity, to ensure appropriate skill levels are maintained. For activities affected by variable water levels, reconnaissance trips under different conditions are beneficial.

Competence of participants

A policy on informing the participants of the nature and extent of risks and what to expect from the activity is recommended. This is particularly important where the participants may have no concept or prior knowledge of this type of activity. The identification of risks should be made clear and allow realistic and uninhibited options to any participants, who as a result, may wish to decline the activity. A policy of identifying the competence, experience, special needs, physical and medical condition of the participants is advised. Particular attention may be needed to try to establish the water confidence and swimming ability participants before undertaking activities which may result in them finishing up in deep, or moving water

Group size

The size of the group and the number of group leaders required will depend on a number of factors including the skills and competence of the group, the venue used and the experience of the group leader. Providers will need to ensure that for each activity the size of the group is appropriate to the skills, knowledge and overall competence of the group leader. If necessary, measures should be taken such as the provision of additional group leaders, reduction

of the size of the group or splitting the group and providing a competent group leader for each group. It will generally be appropriate to have a policy on ratios, maximum group size, use of assistants, etc. This should take account of group management difficulties associated with only having one instructor, which can arise at some venues. Similarly some providers find it useful to have two separate groups operating at the same venue, and available to give mutual support if required.

Briefings and communication

Participants should be advised on what they can do to help ensure their own safety. It may not be appropriate for group leaders to deliver all relevant instructions in one briefing. Verbal communication at some venues can be very difficult. Providers should decide whether other systems of communication are necessary and introduce these at an appropriate point.

The venue

It is vitally important that the venue selected meets the needs of the group. Therefore, alternative venues and access and exit points are advisable to ensure that the degree of difficulty and the duration of the trip are appropriate to the group. On the day the most appropriate venue or variation of venue should be used taking into consideration:

- weather conditions
- competence and expectations of the group
- the number and experience of staff available

In addition, emergency exit points and 'safe areas' will need to be identified in advance of the activity taking place in case there is a need to stop the activity at short notice.

Clothing and equipment

What is appropriate will vary from day to day, and venue to venue. For most activities, particularly those that involve entering the water, a buoyancy aid and a helmet will be needed. The need to have rescue or emergency items, such as extra warm clothing/blankets, flares, ropes, means of contacting others for help, should be considered. As stated earlier the risk assessment should identify the equipment needed and the competencies required to use it safely. A system for ensuring that the equipment is maintained and checked for suitability before being used for the activity is essential.

Forecast of conditions

A policy for obtaining and interpreting weather forecasts, water levels and conditions at sea will generally be needed. It must be clear who is to do this, when it is to be done and the action to be taken for a range of possible forecasts. These could include, but may not be limited to, modification of the venue, change of venue or even cancellation of the activity for that day. Each venue may require "cut-off" conditions or levels identifiable by leaders and/or management. Fluctuating and rising water levels will be particularly significant. Again the considerations of who, when and 'what do they do about it' apply here.

Emergency Action Plans

All involved in the activity need to be aware of their responsibilities in the event of an emergency. A system should be implemented to ensure the relevant authorities are notified: staff at the base should know what to do and whom to contact. When and how does an over-due group become a 'stand-by for action'? or 'action required' and what action, and by whom? etc. Those leading the activity need to have the competencies required to deal with any immediate problems and, if necessary, use the emergency equipment and get help if it is needed. Since a rapid response to a complex situation may be required, the emergency action plan may well be used to guide an instructor's training. This might include the appropriate use of a canoeing throw-line, and positioning and briefing of competent assistants to best effect a rescue.

Jumping into water

It is advisable to carry out a reconnaissance immediately prior to this activity, even at known venues. Depending on the location this may include physically checking entry and exit points (depth, projections, obstructions, swell etc), as well as considering whether the leader needs to be anchored.

Safety boats

Some providers find it helpful if groups are accompanied by or have access to a rescue boat. If the precautions previously mentioned have been

considered, this solution is rarely needed. However, it has been effective, for example, where there is a risk of the group being cut off in sheltered but inescapable bays by a combination of delays and rising tides.

First aid

First aid considerations will generally include a procedure for re-warming cold participants and should take into consideration the nature of the venue and transport arrangements. Some scenario-based first aid training is advisable to ensure that group leaders are able to deal with the types of injuries that may be sustained during activities. Activity providers also need to consider the health implications for first aid staff when dealing with cuts or open wounds.

Relevant Qualifications

Mountaineering Instructor Award - summer (MIA), Mountaineering Instructor Certificate (MIC), British Mountain Guide (BMG), Cave Instructor Certificate (CIC), one of the BCU sea kayaking, surfing or white water rescue awards, Swift-water Rescue Technician, surfing awards, other rescue experience and/or qualifications and first aid awards. There may be a combination of more than one NGB award which adequately provides the necessary competencies. Alternatively a process of ratification by one or more suitably experienced and qualified person(s) may be appropriate.

Case Study 6: Combined Water and Rock Activities*

The Anglesey coast is a popular location for the pursuit of Coasteering and Sea-Level Traversing (SLT) by Outdoor Activity Groups. The coastline boasts a mixture of zawns, inlets and coves with variable rock quality. Some cliffs have safe pools below while others hide rocky shelves below the waterline at various states of the tide.

The venue usage covers a variety of methods from deliberate immersion-based journeys, usually wearing wetsuits and other water-sports gear, through to journeys where the objective is to remain dry, wearing sandals, "wellies" or even rock shoes and perhaps utilising technical climbing equipment. Onlookers on the coastal paths and beaches, or in watercraft, also need to be considered. The environment is less fragile than other water-margin activities, such as gorges and ghylls, but it does have its own unique ecosystem that can and does get incorporated into some of the teachings of the sessions, depending on the aims.

A nearby Outdoor Centre that uses the coastline regularly for Combined Rock and Water activities initially sent a senior member of their staff (an MIC holder, and very experienced in the delivery of SLT and coasteering) to assess the hazards and risks associated with these activities. A decision was made that the skills needed to safely lead at these sites meant that the instructional staff needed to be holders of of ML plus SPA or above with proven, relevant, 'water margin' experience and at some specific sites the minimum requirement was MIA.

*Either way, it was deemed necessary that all instructors should have observed sessions being run at specific venues for familiarisation, have attended a training session, and have been officially signed-off by either the Head of Centre or the Appointed Technical Advisor, who themselves needs to be an MIA, MIC or Guide, with **considerable** proven 'water margin' experience (in this case also a very experienced paddlesport coach in various disciplines).*

In other places where this Outdoor Centre conducts Combined Rock and Water Activities (Gorge Walks etc) then other criteria may be applied to the choice of staff. There is no one set of qualifications or set level of experience that can cover all the aspects of and types of activity incorporated into the title of Combined Rock and Water Activities. However, certain key considerations must be part of the process:

- 1. What are the hazards that are likely to be encountered?*
- 2. What are the skills required of the instructor leading the activity with a group?*
- 3. How much personal and site-specific experience does the leader have?*
- 4. What is the required level of training, observation and signing-off process?*

This is not easy to quantify as the hazards associated with these types of activity are varied and not easily pigeonholed; the approach to deciding who can lead groups on these activities needs to be adaptable, well-structured and well-documented.

* Case study provided by M. Richards (MLT Board) and D. Brown

Appendix VII b Group Safety at Water Margins

This guidance sets out what is considered by the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the Department for Education and Science to be good practice for groups operating at the water margin. It was developed by a working group comprising the following organisations: AHOEC, BAALPE, IOL, NAFSO, MLTE, lifesavers (RLSS) UK, Girlguiding UK, AALA, RoSPA

This information is for teachers, lecturers, youth workers, voluntary leaders and anyone else who might organise and lead the type of educational visit described below. It covers learning activities that might take place near or in water - such as a walk along a river bank or sea-shore, collecting samples from ponds and streams, or paddling or walking in gentle, shallow water. It doesn't cover swimming and other activities that require water safety or rescue qualifications and equipment, or water-going craft.

Hazards are always present. This information lists a number of things to take into account which will help to plan and lead a safe and enjoyable visit.

Things to think about before departing:

- There are many reasons for leading a visit near water. Off-site visits can bring the curriculum to life. They can also develop team-working skills and improve self esteem - which can help to raise achievement. Perhaps more importantly these experiences can help young people begin to learn how to look after themselves in an unfamiliar environment. They can also be fun!
- Whatever the reason for going, having a clear purpose and plan will help the group to get the most from the day – and will help to maintain safety.
- What is the age range of the group? Is the group used to an outdoor environment? Can the group members' behaviour be trusted? How physically able is the group? Do any group members have special educational or medical needs? Will group members have warm, waterproof clothing and suitable footwear? Each of these factors may impact on the choice of venue and activity.
- Leaders need to accurately assess their own competence to lead the proposed visit. If they are a school teacher they should refer any plans to the head teacher and educational visits coordinator or outdoor education adviser. If they work in a local authority or are a voluntary leader, they should find out who is responsible for advising on visits within the organisation, and ask their advice.
- If the proposed activity is beyond your level of competence or resource, then you should make different plans, which are within your capacity.

Alternatively you could approach an external organisation to lead those aspects of the visit that are beyond your capacity.

- Whatever you choose to do, be sure that all those present know who is responsible for what should be happening at every point during the visit.

Getting ready to go:

- If you do lead the visit yourself you should take a number of steps to identify the foreseeable hazards, and to minimize the risks these present to your group. This is commonly known as risk assessment. Some of the things you will need to consider are listed below.
- You will need enough competent helpers on the day. Consider what ratio of leaders to group members is appropriate to your group, activity and venue. The person responsible for advising on visits in your organisation can assist with this. Ask the same questions about your helpers as you would about the group. You should also brief them fully on the purpose and plan for the visit, and ensure that they understand their responsibilities throughout.
- Telling group members in advance about the purpose of your visit, the environment you are visiting and any hazards it presents will help them to prepare and to participate appropriately on the day. If appropriate obtain informed consent from group members' parents.
- You should always check out a venue before you go there with a group. A competent person accompanying you on any exploratory visit can help you to identify hazards, and assist you if you get into difficulty. If in the last resort, a pre-visit is not possible then the group leader should obtain information in other ways in order to prepare adequately for the visit.

Here are some of the things you should think about on an exploratory visit:

- Look for the hazards.
- If you will be working near water, how likely is it that someone will fall in?
- If they do, could you get them out by reaching with a towel, a stick, a piece of clothing or any public safety equipment that is available? Could you wade in to get them without putting yourself in danger? If not then you should move to Plan B. Remember that sudden and unexpected immersion in cold water has a rapid and dramatic effect on the body's systems and will impair people's ability to reach safety.
- Check out what lies downstream, or around the corner from your work area – is there a fallen tree, a fence, a weir, a waterfall - or any other hazard? If you are not happy with your choice of location, look for another, safer one.

Do you intend your group to get into the water?

- First consider whether entering the water is appropriate to the purpose of the visit, and what you expect your group to be doing in the water.
- If you do plan to enter the water, your group must be able to get in and out easily. Find some gradually sloping land and check that the bank is not slippery, and that there is no deep mud or vegetation.
- You also need to be sure there are no underwater hazards (such as rocks or roots which can trap feet, rusty cans or wire which can cut, or strong currents). The best way to check for hazards is to wade in using a strong stick to support you – and ensuring you have a colleague to assist you.
- Remember that fast moving water above knee height is likely to knock people off their feet. Consider whether this is likely at your venue. You may need to move to Plan B.

Think about what could change:

- Your surroundings.
- Are there cliffs above you (could someone knock loose stones down) or below you (how close to the edge are you)? Is there livestock nearby (could it enter your work area)?
- Get a weather forecast before you go and ensure you understand how it might affect your location and planned activity. Heavy or persistent rainfall can alter situations vastly – even when falling elsewhere. Riverbanks will become slippery, and streams and rivers can rise quickly and flow faster. You may need to move to Plan B.
- If you are working near the sea or an estuary check tidal conditions with the coastguard, so you know when high tide is, how high it will reach, and whether there are any strong local currents. Could your work area be cut off or submerged by a sudden wave or quick rise in the tide level? The tide may advance more quickly than your group can retreat. Also beware steeply shelving shingle beaches, where one step could take someone out of their depth. Again you may need to move to Plan B.
- Ask somebody with good local knowledge (perhaps the land or water owner) if there have been any changes to the area, or whether the local environment alters regularly.

Think about what to wear:

- In damp, cold weather wearing a few layers of clothing with waterproof trousers and jacket will help to keep your group warm and dry. Wellingtons or other waterproof boots may be a good idea – however remember that wellingtons can fill with water and make it difficult to reach safety. You should also take some spare clothing and towels with you. In warm weather sunscreen, baseball caps and long sleeves will protect your group from burning. Your group should keep footwear on at all times during the visit.

What's Plan B?

- Plan B is an alternative – not an emergency procedure. You may need to change your plan for any number of reasons. Plan B might mean doing the same activity at a different location, or a different activity altogether. Be prepared to move to Plan B before or even during the activity. You need to pre-check your Plan B also.
- If you visit a place regularly you might be able to identify “cut-off criteria”. These are signs that circumstances have changed such that you need to move to Plan B. Examples might include the river or tide having risen above a certain point. However, remember that visiting one venue once a year for ten years is ten days experience – not ten years.

Things to think about on the day:

- Make sure that somebody at your usual base knows where you are going, what you will be doing and when you expect to return. Also leave details of any alternative plans.
- Although you have prepared your group and helpers in advance of the visit, you should also brief them on the day. Make sure that the group and the helpers know what they will be doing, and what is expected of them. Also let them know about any foreseeable hazards that you identified on the pre-visit. This will help you achieve your objectives – and lessen the chance of something unexpected occurring.
- Always get a local weather forecast on the day of your visit – and know how this will impact on your plans and location.
- On arrival at your venue reconsider the key issues that were raised in your pre-visit. Has anything changed that means you should now switch to Plan B? You should review the situation continuously, as conditions may change at any point, meaning you have to change plan or cut short your visit.
- Your group may well be disappointed if they cannot complete the activity that was originally planned – particularly if they or another group have enjoyed it before. A well-briefed group and a good Plan B can help to overcome this disappointment. If you move to Plan B be sure to notify your base of this.
- Just because you did it last year does not mean that you have to do it this year!
- Just because it was safe last year does not mean it is safe this year!

Group Control:

- Agree the safety rules before the visit and stick to them. If you decided on your pre-visit that it was unsafe to enter the water, then have confidence in your decision and do not be pressured into changing it.
- If you do enter water, keeping the group on task will help to ensure safety, as incidents are more likely to occur during unstructured activity.

The group needs to be aware that pushing, dragging or ducking others into water are unsafe and unacceptable practices.

- Set physical boundaries beyond which the group should not venture. You might use fixed landscape features such as a wall, or place your own markers.
- Having small groups, each with its own leader, is often better than one large group with several leaders. Ideally there would be enough leaders so that the overall leader does not have their own group. Each group should appoint a “head-counter” to check regularly that all members are present. When walking along narrow tracks near water (e.g. a single track canal tow-path) make sure that you, or the sub-leader, makes each group aware of the danger of working in such a restricted environment.
- The prudent leader will often choose to get between the group and a potential hazard.
- If your group needs to change their clothing, normal sensitivity should ensure that neither you nor they are put in a vulnerable position. This issue should be covered in your child protection procedures.

Health & Hygiene:

- Water quality is important and can be affected by a number of factors such as rainfall or hot weather. Bacteria may derive from chemicals, sewage, dead animals or other causes. Have a look round for any obvious signs such as cloudiness in the water, or froth on the surface.
- Make sure your group wash their hands before eating, and if appropriate shower upon return. If any members of your group fall ill following the visit advise them to tell their GP where they’ve been and what they were doing.
- Ensure that the group has sufficient food and drink for the visit. In hot weather it is particularly important to drink water to avoid dehydration.

First Aid & Incidents:

- The group leader should have a good working knowledge of first aid and ensure that an adequate first-aid box is taken. Any wounds should be cleaned and covered quickly.
- Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a visit. Ensure that you know where the nearest hospital is and that you can gain assistance if needed. Remember that mobile telephones may not work in remote areas.
- If you have been trained, and are currently practised, in the use of throwlines you may wish to take one with you. However, remember that taking a throwline is not a reason to take a risk. Using Plan B is preferable to using a throwline.
- Record any incident which may have given you cause for concern. This will help you to understand how and why it happened and how to avoid it in the future.

In the long term:

- The more often you visit a venue, the more confident you will become – but beware complacency! It is still important to check the venue before each visit, as things could have changed since your last visit. You could also do a number of things to develop your own skills and those of others further:
- Visit more venues so that you have a range of alternative plans. This will also help you to develop your understanding of the outdoor environment and the weather.
- You could maintain and develop your own skills by asking for training, and assisting on visits led by more experienced people. You could also help others to develop by asking them to assist on your visits.

Mountain Leader Training

Mountain Leader Training was established in the 1960's in the home nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to set appropriate standards and awards for leaders and to administer and develop the awards. In 2002 it was agreed to simplify their various names to reflect the strong co-operation between the four independent Boards and their UK coordinating committee as follows:



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