



# Mountain Leader

## Candidate Handbook



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## Preface

This handbook has been designed to support candidates through Mountain Training's Mountain Leader qualification. It contains useful information about the qualification as well as the syllabus and guidance notes.

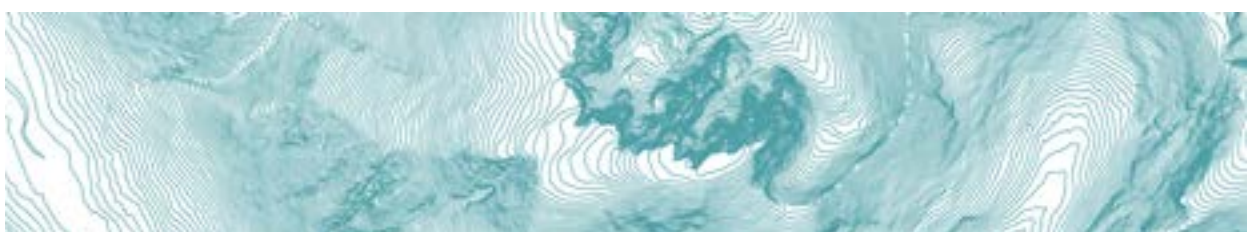
Mountain Training recognises that walking, climbing, and mountaineering are activities that have associated risks.

Mountain Training provides training and assessment courses and guidance to help leaders develop the skills to manage the risks associated with the environment in which they operate and to enable new participants to have positive experiences. All leaders owe a heightened duty of care to the people they lead, their colleagues, and the wider public who may be impacted by the leader's actions.

Mountain Training qualified leaders will act in the best interests of their group, individual group members and others, and they will always act within their competence to prevent harm to them.

## Acknowledgements

Mountain Training would like to thank all the staff members and volunteers involved in the Walking Schemes Review 2019-2022.



## 1. Scheme Pathway

### 1.1 Introduction

The Mountain Leader scheme enables experienced mountain walkers to lead groups in in the mountains, hills and moorlands of the United Kingdom and Ireland in summer conditions.

### 1.2 Scope of the scheme

A qualified Mountain Leader can lead others in mountain, hill and moorland environments. Qualification holders are able to manage groups safely during this activity.



## Terrain

Mountains, hills and moorlands in the UK and Ireland. For the purpose of the Mountain Leader scheme, 'mountainous country' may be defined as wild country which may contain unavoidable steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help.

In the United Kingdom and Ireland this includes:

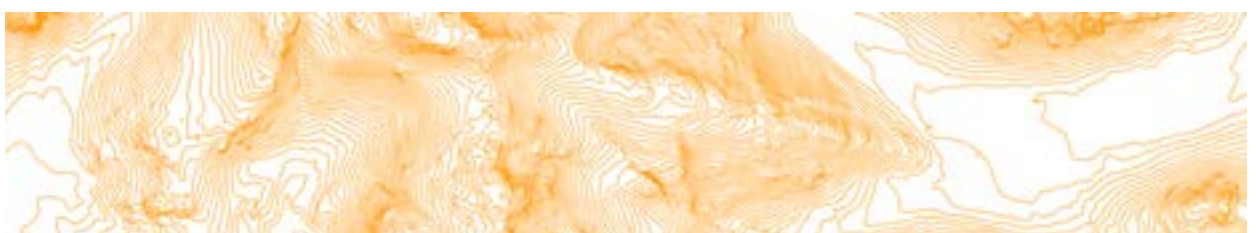
- Eryri (Snowdonia)
- Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons)
- The Lake District
- Mountains of Mourne
- Scottish Highlands
- Galloway Hills
- Cork and Kerry Mountains
- Galway and Mayo Mountains
- Donegal Mountains
- Dublin and Wicklow Mountains

The Mountain Leader scheme integrates experience, training and assessment in what could be challenging and testing conditions in mountainous country.

## Exclusions

The scheme does not cover:

- Rock climbing, nor does it cover the skills required for the planned use of the rope.
- Walks undertaken in winter conditions. This scheme does not provide training or assessment of the skills required to cope with the hazards of winter conditions, particularly lying snow and ice. 'Summer conditions' are defined by the conditions prevailing and not by the calendar (see Appendix 1).





## 1.3 Stages in the scheme

### 1.3.1. Registration prerequisites

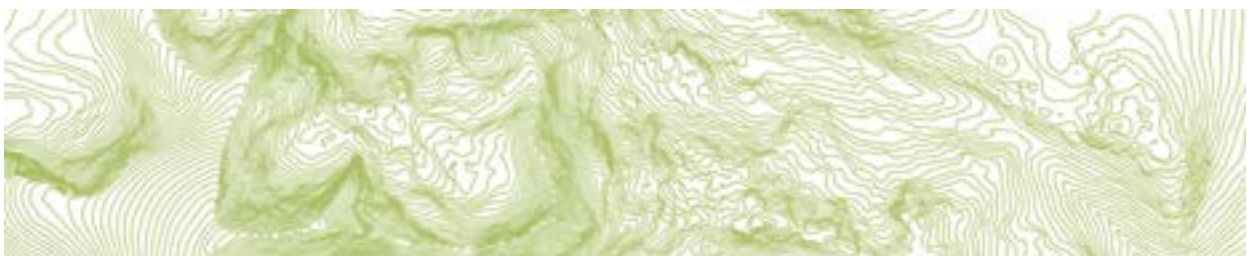
- You must be at least 18 years old.
- You must have a year's personal experience of mountain walking.
- You must have a genuine interest in mountain walking and leading groups in this terrain.
- You must be a member of a mountaineering council (British Mountaineering Council, Mountaineering Ireland, Mountaineering Scotland)

### 1.3.2. Training prerequisites

- You must be at least 18 years old.

### 1.3.3. Consolidation period

- During the period between training and assessment, candidates are expected to gain personal experience walking in mountain areas. This should preferably include some practice in leading parties in easy mountain terrain. Working under the guidance of a suitably experienced leader in more difficult terrain is also recommended. Every opportunity should be taken to practise the skills learned during training.
- All but the most experienced candidates should allow a minimum of six months between training and assessment.
- There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the qualification.



## 1.3.4. Assessment prerequisites

- You must have attended a Mountain Leader training course (or have been granted exemption).
- You must be familiar with the syllabus.
- You must have an up to date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of:
  - + 40 varied Quality Mountain Days in three different regions of the UK and Ireland (see Appendix for definition). This is a minimum requirement. Other personal walking and leadership experience is useful but not essential.
  - + 8 nights camping, including at least 4 nights wild camping.
  - + You must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least two full days or sixteen hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.



## 2. Course structure

### Training

- Training will involve a minimum of 60 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 6 days.
- Results: Completed/Not Yet Completed, Withdrew, Did Not Show, Exemption

### Assessment

- Assessment will involve a minimum of 60 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 5 days.
- Results: Pass, Defer, Fail, Not Yet Completed, Withdrew, Did Not Show
- There is no exemption from any element of the assessment. Practical reassessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment to allow sufficient time for practice and preparation. All deferral reassessments must be completed within five years of the original assessment. Candidates may undertake two short reassessments after a defer result. Subsequently a full assessment must be undertaken.





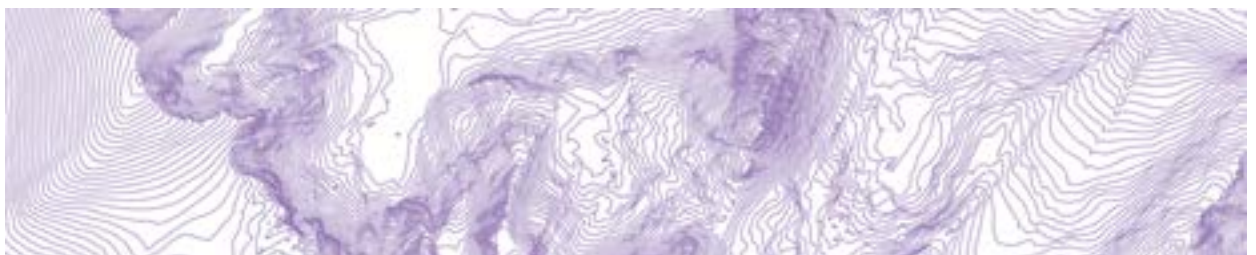
## 3. Course delivery

### Training

- Course director must hold the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor/ Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor/ International Mountain Leader plus Winter International Mountain Leader plus Winter Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Additional staff must hold the Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Min. course size: 2, Max. course size; 12, Max. ratio: 1:6. All candidates will work with more than one trainer during the course.

### Assessment

- Course director must hold the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor/ Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor/ International Mountain Leader plus Winter International Mountain Leader plus Winter Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Additional staff must hold the Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Min. course size: 2, Max. course size; 12, Max. ratio: 1:4. All candidates will work with more than one assessor during the course.



## 4. Awarding organisations

- Mountain Training England
- Mountain Training Cymru
- Mountain Training Scotland
- Mountain Training Board Ireland

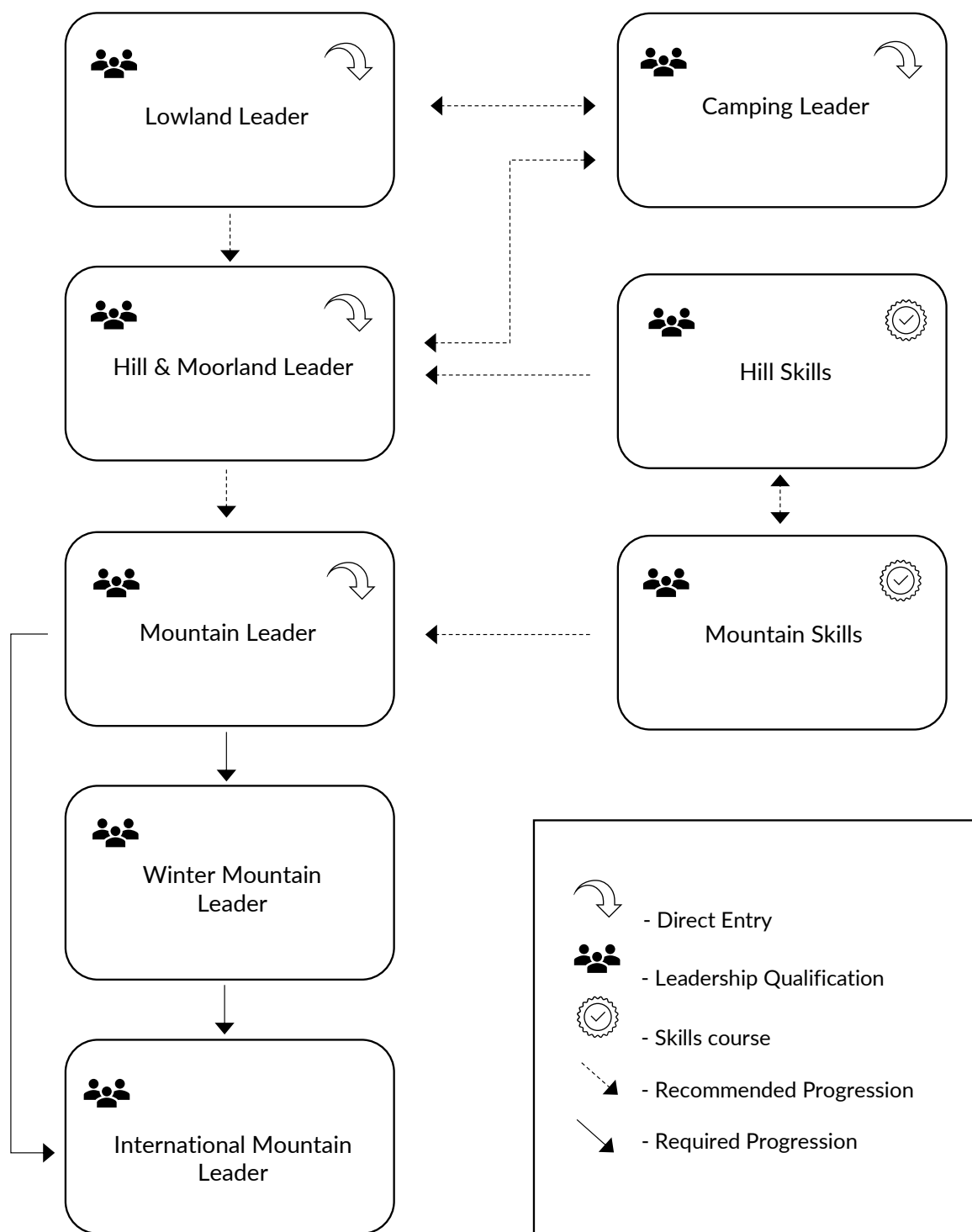


### Mountain Training Association

The Mountain Training Association is a voluntary membership organisation designed to support candidates working towards our qualifications and provide development opportunities for those who already have them. Anyone who is registered on one of our qualification schemes can join the Mountain Training Association and members get access to a wide range of supportive benefits, including access to CPD workshops, discounts on outdoor clothing and equipment and online resources.



# Mountain Training walking pathway



# Syllabus 1. Leader Responsibilities

Mountain Leaders have responsibilities as a group leader with regards to the care and safety of the group. This includes safety management, their own leadership behaviours and ethos as well as dealing with hazards and emergencies. They will be able to:

- 1.1. Explain their general responsibilities to the group and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians, the organising authority, committee or manager of their activity, the outdoor user and the general public.
- 1.2. Explain their specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity.
- 1.3. Demonstrate an understanding of current legislation and the legal responsibilities of that relate to the care of groups under their charge, including safeguarding issues specific to supervising young people and vulnerable adults.
- 1.4. Demonstrate an awareness of the variety of barriers to participation, including mental and physical disability, ethnicity, fitness/health and be aware of the impact of various medical conditions.
- 1.5. Be able to evaluate the experience and signpost towards further participation.
- 1.6. Be able to supervise groups on unaccompanied sections of a walk or expedition.

## Candidate guidance notes

As a walk leader you have a clear duty of care to your groups, the level of which will vary according to the group members' age and experience. You owe a greater duty of care when you are acting in loco parentis with people under eighteen years of age. The countryside presents hazards that may not be apparent to novice walkers, so participants and parents of children participating in this activity should be made aware of and accept these risks.



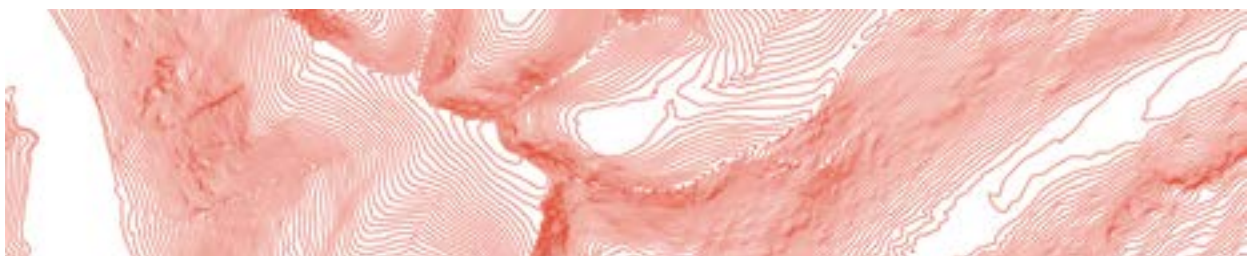


Many of your responsibilities as a leader will be identified through preparation and planning and will likely include: parental consent (if participants are under 18), authority clearance (if required), personal and medical information, finances, insurance and transport. Employing/deploying organisations such as schools, Scouts, Girlguiding and local education authorities will have their own procedures in place to ensure that appropriate preparation has been undertaken. Your understanding of and ability to adapt to these procedures and underlying principles will enable you to independently prepare appropriate walking trips.

The ability to prepare and motivate any group prior to the trip is important and you should seek opportunities to assess the participants in terms of their physical abilities as well as in terms of any equipment needs. It may be that there are many other factors to consider in the preparation and conduct of any walk. If needed, a progression of walks may be used to develop participants' fitness and personal capabilities.

Your position of responsibility extends beyond the journey itself and participants may look to you for guidance on how to continue walking independently or to develop their skills further. A rounded knowledge of suitable opportunities is therefore very useful.

Many walks in appropriate Mountain Leader terrain will fall within the scope of the Adventurous Activity Licensing Regulations. Candidates should be aware of the implications of this for any work they may undertake with those under 18.



## Key practice points

- Explore what different organisations or employers expect from you as a leader with regards to your responsibilities.
- Look at the AALA scope and regulations and work out how, when or if they might apply to you. An introduction to the regulations can be found [here](#).
- Try to design some routes on the map aimed at specific groups with specific aims. (e.g. a Gold DofE training walk or an adult group seeking to complete a mountain fundraising walk.)
- Research opportunities for developing skills or finding walking companions that might be suitable for a range of groups and individuals



## Syllabus 2. Leadership and decision making

2.1. The leader demonstrates adaptable leadership behaviours and decision making.

2.1.1 Monitor the group, environmental conditions and activity, and can adapt their behaviours and decisions to meet ongoing safety, group and task requirements.

2.1.2 Be consistent and confident in their decision making to achieve positive outcomes and communicate these clearly to the group.

### Vision

2.2. The leader is a positive role model and aims to inspire others.

2.2.1 Articulate clear and agreed values for their group; lead by example; and behave how they want the group to behave.

### Support

2.3. The leader creates a positive and supportive environment for the group.

2.3.1 Recognise, respect and adapt to individual needs, differences, strengths and abilities.

2.3.2 Encourage independent learning; establish an environment where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities and provide clear and positive feedback to support this.

### Challenge

2.4. The leader provides relevant and appropriately challenging experiences.

2.4.1 Agree group goals and calibrate the level of challenge to individual abilities and motivations.

2.4.2 Encourage and support the group and individuals to be part of the decision-making process and encourage them to solve their own problems.

2.4.3 The leader understands the Mountain Training ethos of leadership and has developed their own. They should be able to:



2.4.3.1 Articulate their own leadership ethos and beliefs along with those of Mountain Training.

2.4.3.2 Acknowledge and describe a range of leadership approaches, models and associated ethos.

## Candidate guidance notes

The Mountain Leader needs to demonstrate the basic skills and decision making of adaptive leadership. They should have a well-researched plan for their group which incorporates factors such as the group's abilities and needs, the weather and ground conditions, as well as the location and intended route. What is most important is to match their leadership choices with the desired outcomes for the group

In spite of the best made plans, things can and do change – be it the weather, the group, the equipment, or whatever. A good leader will notice, and be on the look out for, these changes before a problem arises and adapt their approach accordingly. For example: if there is more wind than forecast, then the route may need moving to lower or more sheltered ground.

There are seven components of leadership that contribute to the effectiveness of the leader:

1. Leadership style: Controlling versus non-controlling.
2. Decision making: What informs this and how to make them.
3. Leader observations: What they should be and how to make them.
4. Leader communications skills: Verbal and non-verbal, listening.
5. Experience and ability: How this influences decision making.
6. Emotional intelligence: To support individuals.
7. Group management: Techniques, styles and influences.

Candidates should reflect on these when leading groups and seek to develop them over their career.





Underpinning the role of a leader are the values, beliefs, and ethos that shape every individual's view of what leadership should be. All leaders tend to have preferred behaviours (leadership styles) that are heavily influenced by these and their personality traits. Leaders will need to adapt their preferred behaviour to an appropriate set of actions required to balance the needs of both the situation and the group.

The 'Vision, Support, Challenge' model of transformational leadership provides a framework that leaders can use to plan, execute and review their leadership behaviours. In this way, groups who receive the right balance of the three categories can be encouraged to perform beyond their own expectations. Transformational leadership is a model of positive (INSPIRE) behaviours that leaders can use to promote the best outcomes for their groups:

1. Inspire and motivate your followers with a united vision.
2. Nurture an environment of team-focused goals.
3. Set the example you want to see in your followers.
4. Praise, and give constructive feedback to your help followers develop.
5. Insist on setting high standards, relative to each individual.
6. Recognise and respond to teach individual's need.
7. Encourage followers to create and implement their own solutions.

Leaders need to develop trust amongst their group. This requires an appropriate balance of consultation, empathy and instruction to engineer success. Effective leaders will, for example, adapt the way they communicate to best suit their group and will give different degrees of responsibility to groups of varying ability and experience.



## Key practice points

- Make sure your group is ready to receive instruction when you need to give it – gather them together and make sure they are all looking at you before you speak.
- Challenge by choice. Calibrating and establishing agreed goals is the art of good leadership. Too low and they will become disengaged, too high and you will lose their trust. Praise in public, give constructive criticism in private. Call people aside if you need to challenge their behaviour, unless it was directed at someone else.
- Explain your thinking. Followers have a right to know why you are telling them to do something; but retain your authority.



## Syllabus 3. Planning and weather

### Prior planning

- 3.1. Demonstrate an understanding of the scope of the Mountain Leader qualification and plan walks that lie within this terrain.
- 3.2. Know where to find information to assist with the planning of walks.
- 3.3. Choose objectives appropriate to the experience, skills and motivation level of the group, the prevailing conditions and the leader's own experience and ability.
- 3.4. Complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed.
- 3.5. Build in flexibility when planning routes; respond to changing circumstances.

### Weather

- 3.6. Interpret and use reliable sources of weather information.
- 3.7. Demonstrate an elementary understanding of weather maps and resulting weather conditions on the hill.
- 3.8. Recognise weather developments associated with different air masses, major cloud forms, changes in wind direction and in atmospheric pressure.
- 3.9. Recognise and continuously evaluate the effect of weather on route selection, equipment choice, and activity.

### Candidate guidance notes

The ability to plan a mountain journey is an essential skill for a Mountain Leader and is linked to their knowledge of the group as well as an understanding of weather forecasts and how weather influences walking conditions. Many organisations will require a formal record of the planned trip so it is worth becoming familiar with common ways of recording and communicating the plan e.g. route card, annotated



map. This planning can be very useful for acknowledging any alternative routes and identifying the key places along the route where decisions will need to be made. A suitable plan will also accommodate the needs of specific groups or individuals which may influence the route choice. Measurable factors such as distance, time and gradient will be considered as well as hazards or features such as steep ground, loose rock, stiles and streams.

It is impossible to make any walk free from hazard or risk and it is the way in which those risks are managed that is the hallmark of a competent leader. Many organisations have standard procedures for leaders to follow with regards to risk assessments and it is vital that the risk assessment is not simply a file 'back at base' but that there is ongoing, 'dynamic' risk assessment being undertaken throughout the walk. A route that follows a ridge line may need to be re-thought if the wind is stronger or from a different direction than forecast. Planning for multiple eventualities is particularly essential for the Mountain Leader where the severity and remote nature of terrain will affect the outcome of taking one decision or another. Given the nature of the environment Mountain Leaders may plan to bring additional equipment in particularly challenging weather conditions.

The weather forecast is therefore inextricably linked with the route plan and can have a significant impact on the walk and the enjoyment and safety of the participants. Specialist mountain and hill forecasts available will provide a fuller picture of the expected weather for the intended route, particularly if the walk is over exposed ground. A detailed and comprehensive understanding of the major weather systems that affect the UK and Ireland will aid interpretation of the forecast particularly with regards to temperature and precipitation. Observation skills whilst in the mountains will also help you anticipate the speed and severity of possible changes in the weather which might influence your route mid-journey. The Mountain Leader must be able to

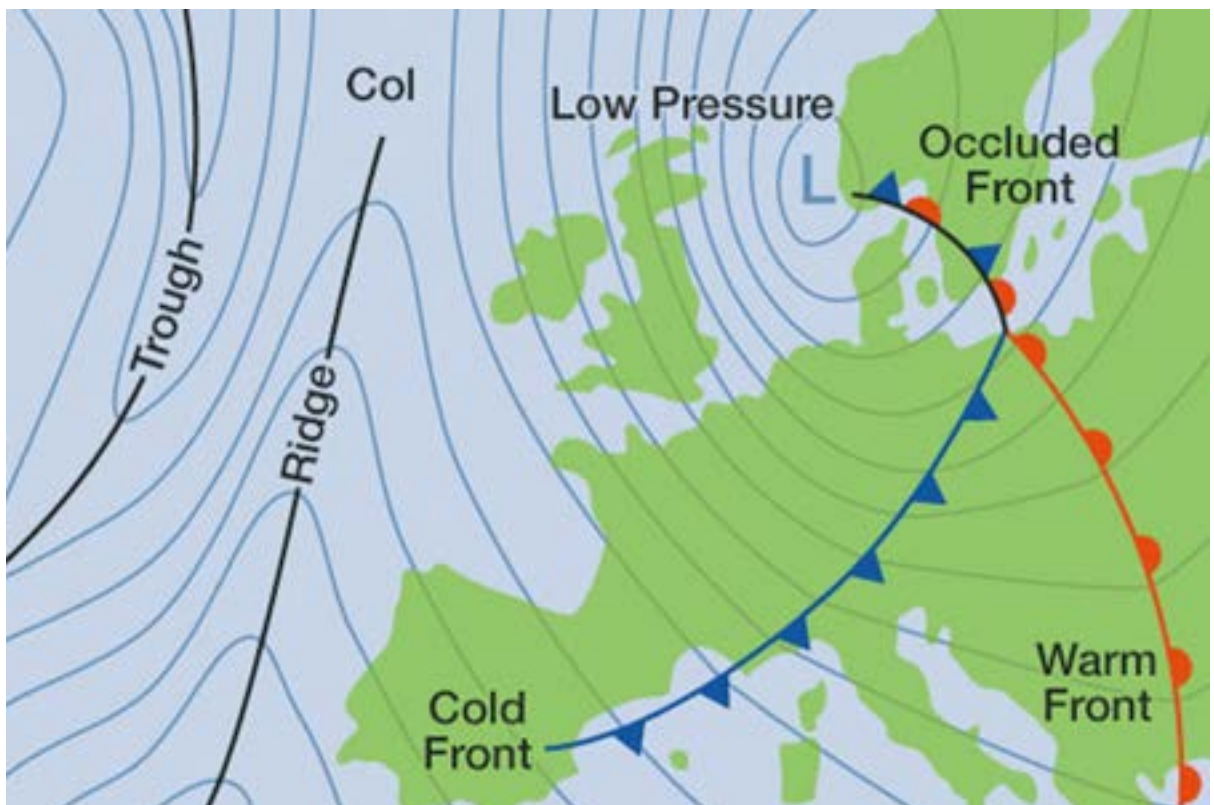




recognise these and act accordingly.

## Key practice points

- Research different sources of weather forecast, particularly those specific to mountain areas, and identify how similar they are for any particular day. What do any differences indicate?
- Familiarise yourself with the main airstreams that impact on the UK and Ireland, particularly about the likely temperature and humidity of the air masses involved.
- Check on the sequence of clouds that might indicate an incoming warm front and see if you can identify those clouds when out on the hill.



## Syllabus 4. Hazards and emergency procedures

### Prior Planning

- 4.1. Demonstrate the ability to manage a group and individuals and ensure safe travel on steep ground.
- 4.2. In an emergency or unplanned event, provide confidence or assistance using a rope. This includes the ability to:
  - 4.2.1 Explain the suitability of different types, sizes and lengths of rope.
  - 4.2.2 Demonstrate safe and efficient rope management.
  - 4.2.3 Demonstrate safe and appropriate knots.
  - 4.2.4 Demonstrate appropriate methods of belaying, including choice of safe anchors.
  - 4.2.5 Demonstrate the use, and explain the limitations, of the rope alone:
    - 4.2.5.1 To protect the whole party in descent or ascent on a short section of steep ground.
    - 4.2.5.2 To safeguard a single party member.
    - 4.2.5.3 To safeguard themselves in descent on steep ground.
- 4.3. Identify and appropriately manage environmental mountain hazards including loose rock, flooding and lightning. They should be able to deal with an unplanned emergency situation where these hazards encountered.
- 4.4. Recognise and manage water hazards (such as marshes, streams and rivers), including the ability to:
  - 4.4.1 Prepare and brief the group appropriately
  - 4.4.2 Understand and explain the dangers and methods of avoidance.
  - 4.4.3 Select suitable crossing points.
  - 4.4.4 Select appropriate un-rope techniques to assist in crossing.





## Emergency procedures

- 4.5. Be able to select an appropriate first aid kit and additional group equipment
- 4.6. Manage self and group in a variety of different weather conditions including heat, cold, rain and high wind.
- 4.7. Describe how to deal with common injuries and medical problems in the mountains.
- 4.8. Explain the causes, symptoms, prevention and treatment of sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia, cold injuries and heat disorders.
- 4.9. Take appropriate action to ensure the group and the casualty's well-being in the event of an incident or accident including knowing how to get appropriate assistance.
- 4.10. Have a basic understanding of Mountain Rescue and how it is organised.
- 4.11. Ensure the casualty's safety until help arrives.
- 4.12. Demonstrate emergency bivouac skills.
- 4.13. Plan and follow 'escape routes', using appropriate navigational techniques, to nearby assistance.



4.14. Manage a group to perform a small-scale search for a missing person.

4.15. Demonstrate improvised rescue techniques and their limitations.

## Candidate Guidance Notes

A Mountain leader will be able to identify and manage, through a combination of planning, route choice, leadership and group management, common environmental and terrain hazards encountered on a mountain journey.

Due to the nature of mountainous areas, Mountain Leaders need to be able to operate safely on steep ground, either through choice or because circumstances have forced them onto such terrain. Effective Mountain Leaders have spent time developing good judgement and decision-making skills that enable them to choose routes through or around steep ground that do not require the planned use of the rope, which is beyond the scope of this qualification.

Rope work is included in the syllabus because unpredictable situations may arise where the rope is necessary to safeguard members of the group. It is emphasised that the techniques used are not those suitable for rock climbing, though several skills are transferable including selecting appropriate anchors, knots and rope management.

Emergency situations may develop from accidents or from errors of judgement. Leaders will experience extra pressures when something goes wrong and should be clear about suitable responses for any given emergency on a journey. It is important that a balanced understanding of what constitutes an emergency is developed. A well-equipped, fit party being delayed for a few hours may create problems with logistics but rarely constitutes an emergency whereas a broken leg should be treated as an emergency under any circumstances.

You should be aware of the procedures for requesting rescue if that should be



necessary and also recognise that rescue is not necessarily an immediate solution; ensure that you and your group are equipped sufficiently to remain on the hill for a period of time.

## Key practice points

- Research different sources of weather forecast, particularly those specific to mountain areas, and identify how similar they are for any particular day. What do any differences indicate?
- Familiarise yourself with the main airstreams that impact on the UK and Ireland, particularly about the likely temperature and humidity of the air masses involved.
- Check on the sequence of clouds that might indicate an incoming warm front and see if you can identify those clouds when out on the hill.

## Syllabus 5. Equipment

Mountain Leaders will be personally competent hill walkers who are able to provide safe walking experiences for novice groups and individuals. To fulfil this role effectively they will be able to:

- 5.1. Choose appropriate food and drink for day walks.
- 5.2. Demonstrate an understanding of the additional equipment required by a leader.
- 5.3. Be able to pack equipment effectively for personal and group use.
- 5.4. Demonstrate an understanding of the design and construction of equipment, including its material characteristics, care and maintenance.

## Candidate guidance notes

As a Mountain Leader your ability to equip yourself appropriately for a variety of conditions and journey lengths will enable you to carry out your role effectively. Given the nature of the environment, particularly in challenging conditions, your





choice of equipment will have a huge impact on the success of the journey. Careful refinement of equipment commonly means Mountain Leaders are 'one step ahead' in particularly poor weather e.g., double waterproofing key items or packing group shelters in an accessible manner. Experienced Mountain Leaders make no assumptions nor leave things to chance regarding the choice or packing of equipment.

You are also likely to offer advice to novices on choice and suitability of clothing and equipment and this advice will need to consider the intended use and available budget; less expensive alternatives can often perform nearly as well as more expensive, branded, outdoor clothing and will be perfectly adequate for those starting out in relatively benign conditions. In more challenging conditions, higher quality equipment will pay dividends but it still doesn't need to be expensive.



Appropriate knowledge and understanding of what is available on the market is therefore useful. Food and drink for any mountain walk should meet the two main requirements of being easy to carry and providing a good return of energy. Appropriate food and drink will vary based on the expected journey time, the



nutritional value of the food as well as its weight and bulk. An understanding of the basics of nutrition will enable you to offer advice on the benefits of different foods.

Whilst the leader should not be overburdened it is important that some extra kit is carried in case of unforeseen circumstances. It may be that some form of assistance might be given to others as well as having to deal with needs amongst their own group. This kit can be shared amongst the group if appropriate and might include spare clothing, spare food, a group shelter and Blizzard bag (or similar), emergency rope and walking poles.

## Syllabus 6. Walking skills

6.1. Demonstrate good practice with regard to individual walking skills: Pace, rhythm, foot placement, conservation of energy, balance and coordination.

### Candidate guidance notes

Walking across uneven, steep or rocky ground is commonplace in the mountains and can be a new skill for some participants. As a Mountain Leader you may need to provide some coaching or support to the members of your group about how to move safely and efficiently in this terrain. Rocks covered in lichen, scree slopes and hillsides covered in grassy tussocks will provide different movement challenges to crossing a stile and your guidance will be invaluable to novice or nervous walkers.

The pace of the journey is also your responsibility and different strategies can be employed depending on the size and make up of the group and their relative fitness levels. A suitable pace, based upon an appropriate timing formula for the group, will help novice walkers not to travel too quickly; especially if travelling uphill. It is important that an accurate view of the capabilities of the group is factored into this. Try to maintain a pace that allows you to talk to others whilst you are moving; and allows them to talk to you as well.





## Key practice points

- Between training and assessment try to get plenty of full day walks under your belt; ideally carrying the kit that you might need as the leader of a group.
- Measure your speed to start developing an understanding of how quickly you move over certain types of terrain.
- Consider what advice you might give to someone crossing a small boulder field for the first time. What information might help them feel more comfortable?

## Syllabus 7. Navigation

- 7.1. Navigate using a variety of commonly used maps and understand the use of scales and symbols.
- 7.2. Demonstrate an understanding of how contours and other cartographic methods are used to represent relief and use them to effectively navigate in the terrain.  
Be able to recognize topographical features in the landscape.
- 7.3. Relate the map to the ground and vice versa. Recognise key features in the



landscape and identify them on a map.

7.4. Accurately navigate across country with map alone.

7.5. Be able to relocate efficiently in a range of situations. Provide six figure grid reference on doing so.

7.6. Measure distance accurately on a variety of maps and calculate how long it will take to get from one location to another.

7.7. Effectively measure distance travelled on the ground using appropriate techniques, in complex terrain inc. accurate pacing and timing.

7.8. Use a compass effectively to navigate in complex terrain.

7.9. Navigate competently in poor visibility due to weather conditions or darkness.

7.10. Explain and use the information given on maps with regard to rights of way and access to land.

7.11. Describe the benefits and limitations of using handheld GPS devices. Candidate guidance notes.

## Candidate guidance notes

Navigation is a fundamental skill in mountain walking and leaders must be confident of their route no matter how limited the visibility. It is important that you can navigate efficiently, accurately and confidently whilst still being able to look after a group, avoid hazards and make the journey interesting. Mountain Leaders have such a mastery of navigation they should be able to locate any feature on a map or in the terrain and relocate in any hill or mountain location.

Your experience will also help you to become a more skilful navigator as you confidently choose the right technique to suit the terrain and visibility. For example, walking on a bearing in good visibility while on a defined terrain feature would be inappropriate; orientation of map to ground would be the more suitable technique. Conversely, trying to map read across a featureless plateau in poor visibility may cause the leader to become disorientated and here the technique of walking on a bearing



would be more appropriate.

Orienteering is a useful and accessible method of micro-navigation training but you must bear in mind that this application of navigation skills does differ from that required by mountaineers.

## Key practice points

- Navigate across unfamiliar ground wherever possible; it will develop your mountaineering judgement.
- Develop your observation skills to aid relocation.
- Ensure that you are comfortable with using a variety of map scales e.g. 1:25,000, 1:50,000 and 1:40,000 scale maps in all conditions.
- Develop your map memory.

Mountain Leaders will be able to supervise a mountain camping group and Mountain Leaders will be able to supervise a mountain camping group and teach campcraft activities. They will be personally competent in a range of campcraft techniques and be able to provide clear demonstration and effective tuition in these to novice campers. They will be able to:

## Emergency procedures

- 8.1. Select and appropriately use a variety of tents, sleeping bags, sleeping mats and other camping equipment.
- 8.2. Select, pack and carry other personal and group equipment for an overnight camp.





## Syllabus 8. Expedition

### Camping food and cooking

- 8.3. Select food and drink and plan menus with consideration nutritional values.
- 8.4. Demonstrate an understanding of food hygiene considerations for food storage, preparation and cooking.
- 8.5. Select and safely use stoves and fuel.
- 8.6. Manage fire risk when cooking with a group.

### Planning and supervision

- 8.7. Select and organise a camp area and individual tents within it (both valley bases and remote locations).
- 8.8. Identify and manage any camp area hazards.
- 8.9. Manage camp hygiene
- 8.10. Manage a group when using different forms of accommodation - bunkhouses, bothies, public and wild campsites.
- 8.11. Demonstrate an understanding of planned bivouacking.
- 8.12. Incorporate a minimum impact approach to camping.

### Candidate guidance notes

Mountain Leaders must be competent camping themselves and managing groups camping in a range of environments within the scope of the scheme. This may involve supervising a group in a specific location or undertaking a multi-day expedition. It is acknowledged that issues which occur in remote locations are potentially more serious than those that occur in less remote environments. Mountain Leaders must take account of this in their planning.



When planning an expedition for or with a group, there are some basic considerations to be thought through such as the distance from help, the site hazards and terrain, what the weather and ground conditions will be like and the resources needed (equipment, food etc.). If camping on organised sites or with the explicit permission of the landowner, there will be few access issues for a group to consider other than making sure that their impact on the site is minimised. Wild camping is perhaps more complex as permissive access varies between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Again, strategies to minimise impact are key to protecting the fragility of the environment and ensuring access in the future.

A sound knowledge of camping equipment is central to the role. As a leader you may also offer advice to novices on choice and suitability of equipment which cannot be done well if you do not have appropriate knowledge and understanding yourself. Your knowledge will enable you to recommend appropriate equipment for groups in your care, bearing in mind the expected conditions and available budget.

An essential area to have a depth of knowledge in is the design, construction and features of a range of tents. It is important to be able to match appropriate tents to particular environments, weather and groups as well as to be able to demonstrate efficient and stable pitching of a variety of types. Different designs and styles of tent all have their pros and cons. Packing and care of tents, including 'temporary repairs', is almost as important as being able to pitch them properly. Maintenance and selection of appropriate accessories such as guy lines and pegs should also be considered. Matching mats and sleeping bags to the anticipated conditions can prevent carrying too much weight in summer or spending a night shivering in late autumn.

Cooking and eating while camping provides valuable social and teambuilding opportunities for groups and their leaders. It is also a time full of challenges which a



Mountain Leader needs to manage. Time spent with your group in advance, planning what food they're going to cook, using which stoves and fuel, is well worth it.

Stoves range from small lightweight offerings used on a multi-day trip to bulky options best suited to campsites with vehicle access. All of them have their strengths and weaknesses and how appropriate they are for novice use, bearing in mind such things as stability, fuel security, ease of refuelling and cost. For the most common stove types, you should have a clear idea of how to teach good practice to novice campers, bearing in mind their experience and responsibility.

## Key practice points

- Practice erecting a range of different tents. Research why there may be differences in the overall designs or features.
- Consider how shared equipment can be divided between a group and what factors will influence who carries what.
- Research environmentally sensitive methods of leaving no trace with regards to cleaning items used for cooking. What systems could be used for packing out any food waste?



## Syllabus 9. Teaching and learning skills

Mountain leaders should be able to teach others and promote learning to ensure the safe enjoyment of mountain walking. They should be able to:

- 9.1. Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group need.
- 9.2. Identify and use appropriate tasks to develop safe group activity.
- 9.3. Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a journey and success of the outcome.

### Candidate guidance notes

Mountain Leaders need to quickly create an environment of trust and confidence within their group so that participants feel relaxed and comfortable to tackle new and challenging activities. The mountain environment can feel inhospitable at times and the activity and terrain can feel overwhelming to the uninitiated.

Age, ability, individual requirements, confidence and energy levels amongst the group will require different approaches to achieve success. Good communication skills are key. The ability to create rapport, communicate at an appropriate level, use positive language, provide a variety of demonstration techniques, check for understanding through skilled questioning and give useful feedback and encouragement to individuals are the foundations of effective teaching.

In addition to these communication skills, effective teaching requires Lowland Leaders to be able to observe and assess participants' abilities, confidence levels and group dynamics, adapting their approach accordingly.

### Key practice points

- Develop a set of 'lesson plans' for teaching common tasks such as packing for an



expedition or route finding in mountain terrain.

- Consider how you might teach a particular skill in a very direct, instructional style and how you would teach the same skill in a student-centred way. What might be the pros and cons of each?
- Consider how you might change your approach in challenging weather.





## Syllabus 10. Access, conservation, and environment

- 10.1. Inspire and enthuse their groups in mountainous terrain in the United Kingdom and Ireland and expand their personal knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of mountain environments.
- 10.2. Demonstrate knowledge of permissive access agreements, rights of way and access legislation such as CRoW Act 2000 and Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the importance of being aware of, and adhering to, access restrictions where relevant.
- 10.3. Explain how to obtain information about access to mountainous terrain and know how, and to whom, access issues are reported.
- 10.4. Explain relevant campaigns and codes of good practice such as Countryside Code, Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Leave No Trace, and acknowledge one's responsibility to minimise impact and promote sustainable use of the outdoors.
- 10.5. Demonstrate knowledge of land management in mountainous terrain and the long-term effects of the human pressures created by its multiple uses.
- 10.6. Demonstrate knowledge of relevant conservation legislation as well as the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use. Leaders should also show an appreciation for the challenge and complexity of conservation in mountainous terrain.

### Candidate guidance notes

It is important for qualified Mountain Leaders to have sound general knowledge of mountainous terrain. A journey will be greatly enhanced by a leader if they can talk knowledgeably about a range of subjects and make the most of learning opportunities when they arise, as the group travel through the mountains. The benefits of this to



group members are myriad and may include:

- Fostering a deeper appreciation of the natural world and our uplands.
- The importance of conservation and sustainable recreation, a greater understanding of pressures and constraints caused by varied land use and ownership.
- An understanding of access legislation and local arrangements.
- A greater appreciation of local culture, heritage and language.

Having the ability to educate groups on a range of subjects may also be used as a subtle and effective leadership strategy as it will enable a leader to pause the walk to give group members a rest or to keep the group together without bringing attention to individuals or situations developing within the group. Land use in mountainous areas can include recreation, arable crops and livestock farming, forestry, water treatment, Ministry of Defence operations, hunting, game bird and wildfowl shooting, habitat restoration and renewable energy production. Each of these can form an interesting discussion topic for a group prior to, during, or after a journey.

Mountain Leaders should be conscious of the impacts of increased recreation activity, including path erosion, conflict between different recreation activities and the effect on host communities. As an absolute minimum, any led group should conform to codes of good practice, comply with relevant access legislation and any prevailing local arrangements. Mountain Leaders should, therefore, always be mindful of setting a good example, demonstrating good practice and explaining the purpose of the codes which are designed to minimise the impact of recreational use on the environment and rural communities by encouraging certain behaviours.

Areas with a special designation might be Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas, within which activities that are



likely to damage the natural features for which the site is designated may require official consent or be forbidden.

Occasionally, a led group may encounter a temporary restriction or change to access arrangements on a chosen route. Under such circumstances, Mountain Leaders should be familiar with sourcing relevant information as required and capable of adopting a flexible and diplomatic approach to minimise conflict. Sources of information include: Local authorities, local community groups, local access forums, national access forums, National Park Authorities, guidebooks, maps, countryside agencies, internet apps, and mountaineering councils. In addition Mountain Leaders should recognize that all walkers have a role in maintaining access, especially in situations where access is not formally defined.

As all candidates will be members of a mountaineering council it is expected that they should be familiar with the work undertaken by the councils with regard to access, conservation and the environment.



# Syllabus 11. Background knowledge

11.1. Explain the role and ethos of Mountain Training and its schemes, the mountaineering councils and walking clubs. Demonstrate an awareness of the history, traditions and ethics of recreational mountain walking in the UK and Ireland.



## Candidate guidance notes

The nature of walking as a recreational activity doesn't require a formal system of governance, however there is a web of support for all walkers, comprising the national Mountain Training organisations, the Mountain Training Association and the mountaineering councils, among other organisations. These organisations directly and indirectly support and enable activity across the spectrum, from youth groups and challenge events to independent adults and professional instructors.

The Mountain Training part of this network provides skills training and nationally recognised leadership qualification as well as information on good practice through a



range of publications. Gaining a Mountain Training qualification is the formalisation of your experience and competence to be responsible for others while camping, walking, climbing or mountaineering. Through a network of approved course providers across the UK and Ireland, over 10,000 candidates attend a Mountain Training course each year and go on to lead and inspire millions of people. Mountain Training's vision, mission and ethos underpins all decision making and activity.

Candidates can join Mountain Training's Association (MTA) as a Trainee or Full member. In joining the association, you will have access to training opportunities to support your development and become part of a community of trainee and qualified leaders with a shared interest. By providing the highest quality personal development opportunities including workshops, webinars and a quarterly magazine, Mountain Training's Association supports and develops its members to excel.

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Mountaineering Scotland and Mountaineering Ireland work to protect the interests of walkers, climbers and mountaineers and the cliffs, hills and mountains they enjoy. Without their work, access to these spaces would be curtailed for all, including for leaders, coaches and instructors. By joining a mountaineering council, you are helping to ensure this access today and for the future.

Hill walking clubs and organisations can be useful in guiding participants into long-term independent participation; they include well-established local or national clubs and less formal online groups. As a leader, novices may look to you for advice on how to find other people to walk with and how to develop confidence and competence.

Your ability to direct them to appropriate courses such as Mountain Training's Hill & Mountain Skills scheme or guidance on finding a club can lead to a lifetime of enjoyment.





# Appendix 1. Definitions

## Mountainous country

For the purpose of the Mountain Leader scheme, 'mountainous country' may be defined as wild country which may contain unavoidable steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help. In the United Kingdom and Ireland mountainous country includes:

Snowdonia

Galloway Hills

Brecon Beacons

Cork & Kerry Mountains

Lake District

Galway & Mayo Mountains

Mountains of Mourne

Donegal Mountains

Scottish Highlands

Dublin & Wicklow Mountains

## Quality mountain day

A 'Quality Mountain Day' for the Mountain Leader should take place in mountainous terrain in the UK or Ireland.

The quality element lies in such things as the conditions experienced both overhead and underfoot, the exploration of new areas, the terrain covered, the skills deployed and the physical and mental challenge. The experience of a quality day should contribute to knowledge, personal development and associated skill acquisition.



All of the following criteria should be fulfilled:

- **The individual takes part in the planning and leadership.**
- **Knowledge is increased and relevant skills practised.**
- **An unfamiliar locality is explored.**
- **Judgement and decision making is required.**
- **A mountain is ascended**
- **Five hours or more journey time.**
- **Navigation skills are required.**

These criteria mean that days as a course member under instruction, a member of a group practising skills, or days spent repeating familiar routes a very unlikely to meet the requirements of a quality day.



## Wild camping

Wild camping takes place in moorland or mountain terrain remote from roads and habitation. Wild camping has the potential to adversely affect the locality by vegetation trampling and pollution through food and human waste. It therefore needs to be undertaken with sensitivity combining care for the environment with personal enjoyment.

## Summer and winter conditions

The term 'summer conditions' is used to describe any conditions not covered by the term 'winter conditions'.

'Winter conditions' can be defined as the time when snow and ice prevail, and travel requires the skills and equipment required to cope with the special hazards of winter conditions. Mountain Training Scotland's Winter Mountain Leader scheme provides specific training and assessment for winter conditions in the hills and mountains of the UK and Ireland.

Neither term can be defined by a portion of the year, i.e. 'summer conditions' can prevail during the winter months; likewise it is possible, especially in high mountain areas of Scotland, for extensive snow and ice, and hence 'winter conditions' to prevail well into summer.



## Poor visibility / darkness

The terms 'poor visibility' and/or 'darkness' are used to describe situations where an individual's line of sight, i.e. how far they can see, may be limited by weather (e.g. mist/low cloud, heavy driving rain), environment (e.g. plantation woodland, complex rolling terrain) and/or time of day (e.g. night time).

Any combination of any or all of these can severely restrict a person's line of sight requiring specialist navigation skills to navigate their journey safely and efficiently. Night-time alone does not in and of itself equate to darkness. During the summer months in Scotland, assuming clear skies, it never really gets dark. Likewise in clear weather with a full moon it is unlikely to be dark enough to warrant reliance on specialist navigational techniques and skills.

## Steep ground

'Steep ground' as described by Mountain Training is complex terrain where a walker's experience in weaving a safe route is demanded, and decisions about managing safety on exposed steps or sections with require judgement and foresight. Steep ground may include broken, often vegetated ground with a fair proportion of visible, potentially loose, rock, where the consequences of a slip or fall might be serious.





## Appendix 2. Additional information

### Leadership experience

Days spent leading groups, including peer groups, are valuable experience and can be counted as quality mountain days (QMD) as long as they meet the QMD criteria, which includes making decisions for the group and do not repeat routes. This experience often pays dividends at assessment.

Days assisting a more experienced leader are also very valuable but do not count as quality days (and should be logged separately). Whilst you are assisting a leader, they are the one ultimately making the judgements and decisions and having overall responsibility; you may be picking up tips about how to manage groups but your personal abilities will not be being stretched.





## Overseas experience

Whilst overseas experience can be useful as an indication of breadth of experience, these days, if used as part of your logged 'quality days', should be in similar terrain and conditions to those found in the UK and Ireland to be truly relevant as preparation for assessment. Experience gained in areas other than the UK and Ireland can be recorded if undertaken in similar conditions to those found in the UK and Ireland. Experience gained in areas other than the UK and Ireland can be recorded if undertaken in similar conditions to those found in the UK and Ireland. However, at least 50% of the minimum requirements should be in the UK or Ireland.

## Course delivery

Mountain Training courses are delivered by approved providers throughout the UK and Ireland. Providers of Mountain Leader courses will appoint a course director for each course.

Courses can be found by searching on the Candidate Management System (CMS) at <https://mt.tahdah.me> or on our website at <http://www.mountain-training.org/find/find-a-course>.



## Exemption from training

Candidates who already have substantial personal experience in mountainous areas as well as experience in the leadership of groups may apply for exemption from training.

To qualify for exemption candidates must, at the very least, meet the minimum experience requirements for attendance at an assessment course. They should also have at least two years recent experience leading groups and wild camping in the mountains of the UK and Ireland.

Further details of the exemption process can be found on the Mountain Training website.

There is no exemption from assessment.

## Further information

Once you have passed the Mountain Leader assessment you are responsible for remaining current and up to date with good practice for as long as you are using your qualification. Mountain Training would like to encourage you to regularly dedicate some time to your development both as a hill walker and as a Mountain Leader.

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 Training endorses this view, while emphasizing that nationally recognized qualifications are the key components in such an approach.

Remaining current and competent can be achieved in various ways, one of which is to join an association.

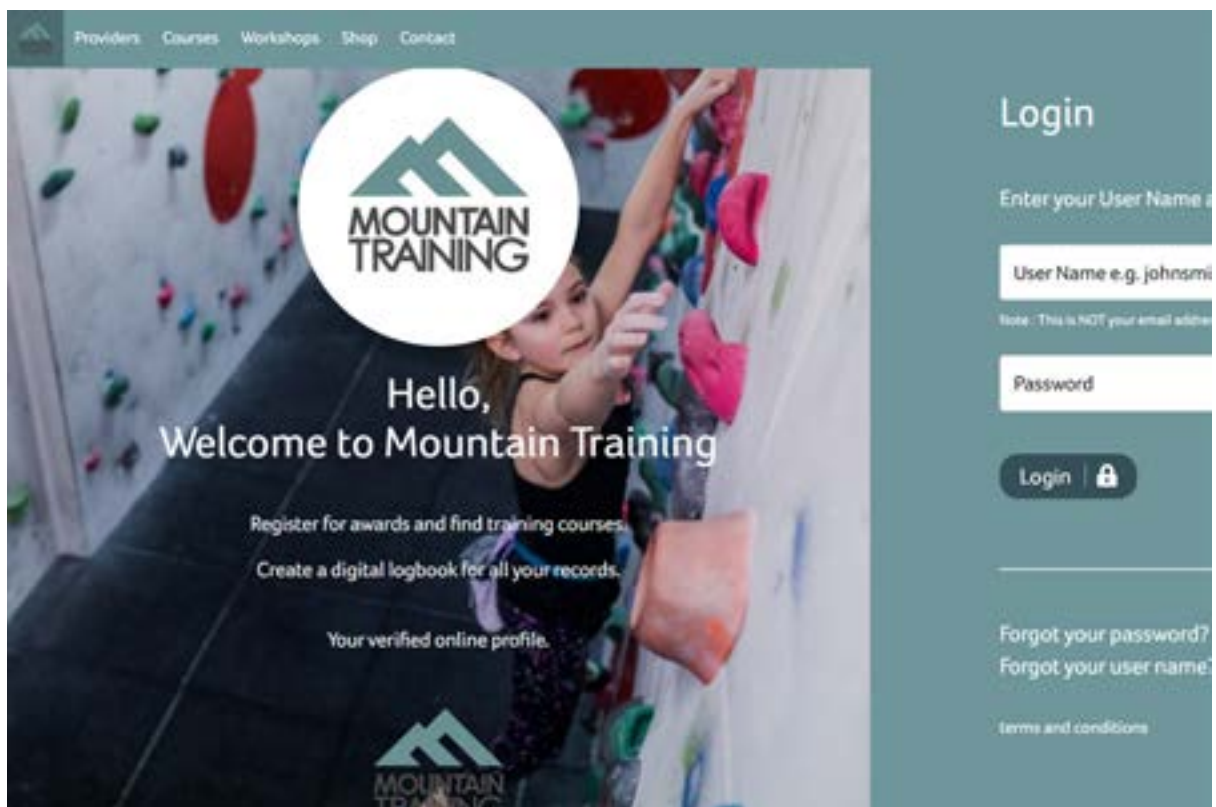
The Mountain Training Association is a membership association designed to support both trainee and qualified candidates by providing access to developmental workshops, conferences and peer learning events among other member benefits.



# Candidate management system and DLOG

Mountain Training uses software powered by Tahdah to record your journey through our schemes. You can use the system to:

- Register for a qualification.
- Buy recommended books from the Mountain Training shop
- Search for a training or assessment course.
- Record your experience in DLOG (the digital logbook).
- Join an association or mountaineering council.
- Access e-learning modules <https://mt.tahdah.me>



## Logging your experience

The foundation of your success as a Mountain Leader is your experience. It is this experience that enables you to learn from the training course, consolidate your learning, pass an assessment and then continue to develop as a leader and walker.

There are fourteen activities you can log, including walking, lowland walking, and winter walking, and all of them start by searching the database. There are some information boxes on the screen – please read these to help with the logging process.

Top tips:

- ‘Lowland Walking’ should be used to log hill and mountain walks in named hill/mountain areas.
- Use the description box to describe your route and key learnings from the day particularly if you’re logging it as a Quality Mountain Day.
- Non-QMD walks are still useful supporting evidence so feel free to log time spent practising particular skills or walks in non-mountainous parts of the country.

## Uploading your previous experience

If you have recorded your experience in another format already and want to start using DLOG, you can upload your existing logbook as a file to the Files tab. (The Files tab accepts various file formats including word, excel, pdf, jpg and png).

Many candidates who do this also chose to create DLOG records for their most recent or most significant walks.





## Sharing your DLOG

When you book on to a training or assessment course, your logbook will become visible to the course director. If you would like some feedback prior to this, you can share your logbook with a mentor/friend/future course director by clicking on the Share tab, entering their email address and selecting the length of time they can access it.



# Mountain Training Association

The Mountain Training Association is a voluntary membership organisation designed to support candidates working towards our qualifications and provide development opportunities for those who already have them.

It is committed to fostering progression and encouraging good practice amongst its members so that others can enjoy professionally-led activities.

Join the MTA and get the support you'll need to succeed.



*“The workshops I’ve done have been brilliant and have definitely made me a better leader.” - Alex Kendall (MTA Member, 2016)*



## How to join

Membership is annual. Simply pay online via your Mountain Training account or visit the website for more information.

## Who can join

Anyone that has registered for a Mountain Training qualification is welcome to join the Mountain Training Association. The sooner you join the quicker you can take advantage of all of the great benefits on offer.

## Member benefits

- Access to accredited CPD workshops.
- Quarterly magazine and monthly e-newsletter
- Big savings on outdoor gear and courses
- Specially negotiated rates for civil liability insurance\*
- Online resources and guidance
- Regional networking and training events
- MTA branded merchandise
- Advertise and promote yourself online\*
- Use the MTA logo to promote yourself \*

\*Full members only

