Mountain Leader Award Handbook

For those who wish to lead groups in the mountains,
hills and moorlands
of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Preface

This booklet contains all the information needed to progress through the Mountain Leader Award scheme. It is designed to support the knowledge and experience of candidates, trainers and assessors whilst at the same time avoiding prescribed techniques. There are many technical manuals for walkers and mountaineers that illustrate the range of evolving techniques used by leaders; these notes are designed to complement such literature (see Appendix 3).

The booklet is divided into four parts:

- Prospectus that explains the way you progress through the Mountain Leader Award scheme from registration to assessment.
- Syllabus that lists the skills of a mountain leader.
- Guidance Notes that help advise candidates and their trainers and assessors of protocols and procedures.
- Appendices that provide background information.

Participation Statement

Mountain Leader Training (MLT) recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions. MLT provides training and assessment courses and associated literature to help leaders manage these risks and to enable new participants to have positive experiences while learning about their responsibilities.

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Prepared by the officers and the administrative staff of MLTE, MLTNI, MLTS, MLTW & MLTUK.

Published by Mountain Leader Training UK
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ET
Tel: 01690 720272 Fax: 01690 720248 Email: info@mltuk.org
Website: www.mltuk.org

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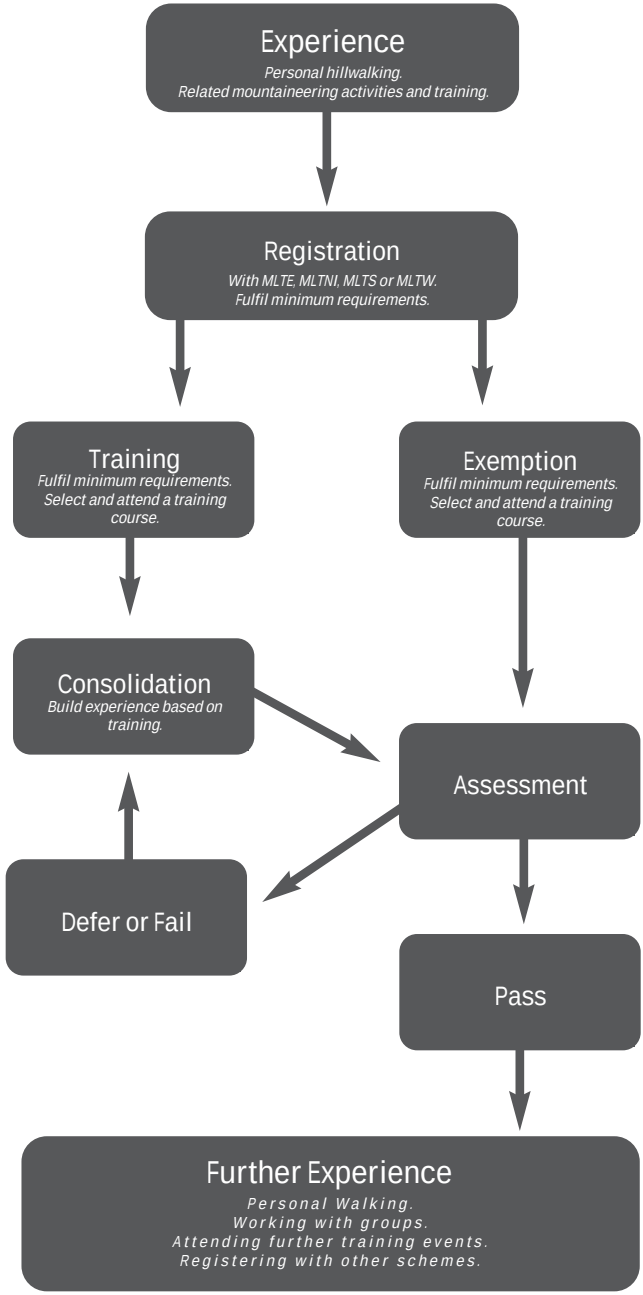
The ML Scheme at a glance



Prospectus

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Mountain Leader Award (ML) was established to promote the safe enjoyment of the hills and mountains. The scheme provides training and assessment in the technical and group management skills required by those who wish to lead groups in the mountains, hills and moorlands of the United Kingdom and Ireland, other than in winter conditions. It integrates experience, training and assessment in a variety of testing conditions in mountainous country.

2 SCOPE OF THE SCHEME

2.1 The ML scheme offers the opportunity to gain technical competence in leading walkers in the hills and mountains. It does not provide a rock climbing qualification, nor does it cover the skills required for the planned use of the rope. Completion of a training course, without a pass result at assessment, is not a qualification in itself.

2.2 It is the combination of technical skills, wide experience and personal leadership qualities, which form the basis for effective group management, and the scheme assesses all these aspects. However, the employer or operating authority must ultimately decide whether a leader has the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for a particular group of people.

2.3 The scheme is intended for those leading groups in mountainous or remote country. For a full list of areas in the UK and Ireland defined as mountainous country see Appendix 1. The ML Award is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive and the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority as being an appropriate award for leading trekking in summer conditions (see Guidance to the Licensing Authority L77, HSE Books).

2.4 The Mountain Environment: mountains mean freedom, adventure, beauty and solitude. Therefore, whilst fostering a love of the hills in others, group leaders should show appreciation of the needs of hill users, rural communities and upland habitats and encourage an understanding of the problems of mountain conservation and access. Consideration of these aspects is vital if the mountain environment is to be protected.

2.5 The term summer is used to describe any conditions not covered by winter. Winter can be defined as the time when snow and ice prevail or are forecast. Neither term can be defined by a portion of the year. The ML scheme does not provide training and assessment in the skills required to cope with the special hazards of winter conditions, particularly snow and ice. Mountain Leader Training Scotland's Winter Mountain Leader Award scheme provides specific training and assessment for winter conditions in the UK and Ireland. More information about the winter scheme is available from MLTS (see Appendix 4 for address).

3 STAGES IN THE SCHEME

The scheme consists of six stages:

3.1 Gain personal hill walking experience.

3.2 Register and be issued with a logbook.

3.3 Attend a training course.

3.4 Consolidate experience.

3.5 Attend an assessment course.

3.6 Continue to gain and record experience and any relevant additional training.

4 REGISTRATION

4.1 To register you should have at least twelve months experience of hill walking. You must also have an interest in leadership of groups in the hills and be at least eighteen years of age.

4.2 Candidates with particular requirements or special needs may wish to contact Mountain Leader Training staff for advice and guidance (see Appendix 4).

5 TRAINING

5.1 In order to attend a training course you must be registered with the ML scheme and have experienced at least twenty quality mountain days (see Appendix 1). The sample logbook page and personal mountain walking pages in your logbook will help you present this information to your training course Provider.

5.2 Candidates must attend a training course with a Provider approved by one of the four home nation training boards. Courses are delivered in a variety of formats, and have a minimum contact time of sixty hours with the trainers. Lists of courses are available from the boards.

5.3 The training course is for potential leaders and assumes basic competence as a hill walker. It emphasises those skills, which a candidate may have difficulty in learning without expert guidance. Some aspects of the syllabus may not be covered during the training course and candidates are expected to deal with these items themselves.

5.4 At the end of the course the Course Director will complete the training course report page in the logbook and will attach a numbered sticker to the endorsement page.

5.5 Candidates are reminded that attendance on a training course must not in any way be considered a qualification in its own right. This is only achieved by completion of the entire ML scheme including an outright pass on the assessment course.

6 CONSOLIDATION PERIOD

6.1 During the period between training and assessment, candidates are expected to gain personal experience in mountain areas. This should preferably include some practice in leading parties in easy hill country. 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.

6.2 Prior to attending an assessment course candidates must have experienced an absolute minimum of forty quality mountain days. They should aim for maximum variety within these forty days. This experience should be gained in at least three different regions of the UK and Ireland and should include at least eight nights camping, at least four nights of which should be wild camping. (See Appendix 1 for definitions of a quality mountain day (QMD) and wild camping.)

6.3 Experience gained in other mountain activities is useful but not a pre-requisite. Some non-UK experience may be included but should be in terrain and conditions that are similar to those in the UK. Normally these days would be considered as additional experience and should not form a substantial part of the required total of QMDs. The ML scheme is designed for the terrain and conditions encountered in the UK and Ireland. See MLTUK's National Guidelines for further information on remits.

7 FIRST AID REQUIREMENTS

7.1 Prior to attendance on an assessment course candidates must hold a valid first aid qualification. Courses must be delivered by a Health and Safety Executive approved provider, must involve at least sixteen hours of instruction, include an element of assessment and cover basic life support and emergency aid.

8 ASSESSMENT

8.1 Candidates should be familiar with all aspects of the syllabus before assessment, even if some parts were not covered in detail during training. Assessment courses provide at least sixty hours of contact time between candidates and assessors and candidates are tested in accordance with the syllabus.

8.2 The Course Director endorses the logbook with an assessment report and makes appropriate recommendations. The assessment report will take one of three forms:

Pass: awarded where the candidate has demonstrated appropriate knowledge and application of the course syllabus and has shown the necessary experience and attributes of mountain leadership. The Course Director issues a pass page and numbered sticker.

Defer: awarded where the candidate has generally performed well and has shown the necessary experience and attributes, but where complete proficiency has not been attained in certain aspects of the syllabus or where a lack of experience has been identified.

Fail: awarded where the candidate's performance has been generally weak, or the necessary experience and attributes have not been shown.

8.3 In the case of a deferral, candidates are encouraged to return to the original assessment Provider but can be re-assessed by any assessment Provider approved by Mountain Leader Training. Practical re-assessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment. All deferrals must be completed within five years. Only two re-assessments are permitted before having to take the entire assessment again.

9 EXEMPTION FROM TRAINING

9.1 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 of leading groups and camping wild in the mountains of the UK and Ireland.

9.2 To apply for exemption, candidates must:

- be registered with the ML scheme.
- obtain and complete an exemption application form.
- forward the fee and logbook extracts as detailed on the application form.

Candidates should allow at least three weeks for completion of this process.

9.3 There is no exemption from assessment.

9.4 Holders of the WGL Award can present their training and assessment courses as part of an application for exemption from training alongside relevant personal experience.

10 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Training Boards are committed to promoting equal opportunities for all participants in hill walking, climbing and mountaineering. Candidates, trainers and assessors should express a positive attitude towards equal opportunities and act as positive role models.

11 COMPLAINTS & APPEALS PROCEDURE

The ML scheme is subject to continuous monitoring, culminating in a formal review once every four years. Candidates with feedback on their courses are encouraged to submit written comments to the Provider or to their Board.

If for any reason you find it necessary to complain about an aspect of your training or assessment then you should contact the Course Director or the relevant officer within Mountain Leader Training.

If you feel that aspects of your assessment were unfair you should:

- make contact with the Course Provider, explain your concerns and seek clarification.
- if this does not resolve your concerns, contact the Secretary of your board for advice and for details of the appeals procedure. The decision of the board will be final.

12 FURTHER EXPERIENCE

Award holders should follow the National Guidelines issued by MLTUK (see www.mltuk.org). In particular they should note that the award remains valid only where the holder is deployed within the remit of the award and the holder has recent logged experience appropriate to that award. The responsibility for ensuring that leaders receive refresher training must lie with the provider of the service or the individual, in the case of self-employed leaders.

Syllabus

There is a wide range of skills and knowledge that a mountain leader needs in order to operate effectively. Not only is it necessary to perform each element in isolation, it is also vital that leaders are able to combine several skills at any one time. For example they need to be able to look after their group and navigate simultaneously.

1 GROUP MANAGEMENT AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GROUP LEADER

Candidates must be familiar with the main areas of responsibility of the mountain leader.

1.1 General Responsibilities

a. to individuals, to the group as a whole and where appropriate to parents/guardians.
b. to the organising authority, committee or manager of the activity.
c. to the general public, the environment, environmental bodies and organisations, local residents, land managers, the mountaineering fraternity, fellow leaders and Mountain Leader Training.

1.2 Specific Responsibilities

a. to choose objectives appropriate to the experience, skills and motivation level of the group, the prevailing conditions and the leader's own experience and ability.
b. to carry out or supervise relevant planning considerations e.g. parental consent, authority clearance, personal and medical information, finances, insurance and transport.
c. to complete detailed preparations e.g. plan routes, check access, obtain weather forecasts and brief the group.
d. to ensure the group is appropriately prepared for the activity.
e. to comply with current legislation relating to the activities.

1.3 Operational Responsibilities in the Mountains

a. to manage the group effectively by setting and reviewing targets, performing ongoing risk assessments, positive decision making, delegating where appropriate, group control, discipline and good communication.
b. to meet the changing needs of the group paying particular regard to the health and fitness of its members, whilst maintaining confidence and enthusiasm.
c. to provide a safe and rewarding experience for each group member through involvement, interest, enjoyment and achievement, through imparting appropriate technical skills and competence and through fostering environmental awareness.
d. to evaluate the experience and motivate towards further participation.
e. to supervise groups on unaccompanied sections of a walk.

1.4 Personal and Leadership Skills

a. demonstrate a flexible leadership style and sound judgement with regard to the group and its objectives.
b. demonstrate good practice with regard to individual skills: pace, rhythm, foot placement, conservation of energy, balance and co-ordination.
c. make suitable route choices, interpret and evaluate terrain, revise routes where necessary.
d. identify and manage risk.
e. move with the group on difficult terrain including scree, narrow ridges and steep broken ground using appropriate techniques.
f. demonstrate effective group management and supervision skills.

2 NAVIGATION

It is essential that a mountain leader can navigate competently. Candidates will be expected to choose the appropriate navigation technique for the prevailing conditions and be able to introduce these skills to others.

Candidates should be familiar with the following:

a. maps, scales and conventional signs.
b. contours and other methods of showing relief.
c. topographical features.
d. relating the map to the ground and vice versa.
e. measuring distance on the map and the ground.
f. navigating across country with map alone.
g. compasses and other navigation aids.
h. methods of identifying features and position.
i. methods of relocation.
j. methods for navigating across country in poor visibility and/or in darkness.
k. route planning, including methods of recording routes.

3 ACCESS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Candidates should:

a. aim to inspire and enthuse their groups in the mountains and continuously expand their knowledge and understanding of the environment.

b. demonstrate knowledge of current legislation as it relates to the various home nations regarding access to the countryside and appreciate the significance of access agreements and Rights of Way in upland areas.

c. demonstrate knowledge of land management in upland areas and its multiple uses, e.g. hill farming, forestry, water collection, grouse shooting and deer stalking.

d. demonstrate knowledge of current relevant conservation legislation and appreciate the problems of conservation with respect to flora, fauna and erosion. They should also understand the nature of specially designated areas and any limitations on their use and be aware of long term effects of human pressures on the upland environment.

e. know how to get information about access to wild country e.g. from appropriate guidebooks, maps, countryside agencies and relevant mountaineering bodies.

f. be familiar with the Country Code and understand the individual's responsibility to minimise impact on the environment.

4 HAZARDS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

4.1 Hazards of Steep Ground

Mountain Leaders should be familiar with techniques to ensure safe travel through steep and broken ground. This should be through a combination of planning, route choice and group management. However situations may arise where the rope is necessary to safeguard members of the group. The candidate should recognise such difficulties and potential dangers leading to the need to use rope techniques to provide confidence or assistance. It is emphasised that the techniques used are not those suitable for rock climbing.

Candidates should be familiar with the following:

a. suitability of different types, sizes and lengths of rope.

b. rope management.

c. appropriate knots.

d. appropriate methods of belaying, including choice of safe anchors.

e. use and limitations of the rope alone:

   i. to protect descents and ascents for the whole party.

   ii. to safeguard a single party member.

4.2 Environmental Hazards

Environmental mountain hazards include loose rock, flooding and lightning. A mountain leader should exercise sound judgement to avoid these hazards but should know how to deal with them if necessary.

4.3 Water Hazards (including marshes, streams and rivers)

a. preparation, skills and safety procedures for leader and group members.
b. dangers and methods of avoidance.
c. selection of the best crossing points.
d. crossing with and without the use of a rope.

4.4 Emergency Procedures

a. procedure in the event of an accident.
b. methods of search and evacuation.
c. a basic understanding of how Mountain Rescue is organised.
d. improvised mountain rescue techniques - application and limitations.
e. emergency bivouac skills.

4.5 Medical

Candidates should meet the first aid requirements of the training schemes and have an understanding of the following conditions, their causes, signs, symptoms, prevention and treatment:

a. mountain hypothermia (exposure) and its treatment both in the field and at base.
b. cold injuries.
c. heat disorders.
d. allergic reactions.
e. common medical problems, e.g. asthma, diabetes, blisters, sprains.

5 EQUIPMENT

Candidates should demonstrate knowledge of:

5.1 personal and group equipment required for mountain walks and camps, taking into account various weather conditions.
5.2 additional equipment required by a leader.
5.3 design and construction of equipment, including its material characteristics, care and maintenance.

6 EXPEDITION SKILLS

Candidates should have knowledge and experience of the following aspects of mountain camping:

6.1 Equipment

a. packing and carrying personal and communal equipment.
b. Selection and safe use of camping stoves and fuel.

6.2 Food

a. selection of suitable foods, their quantities and packaging.
b. preparation and cooking.

6.3 Other Skills

a. selection of campsites (both valley bases and remote locations).
b. siting and pitching of tents.
c. organisation of camp and individual tents.
d. group and personal hygiene and sanitation.
e. use of huts, bothies and other shelters.
f. bivouac skills.

7 WEATHER

7.1 Candidates must have relevant knowledge and understanding of the weather. They must gain practical experience in relating regional weather forecasts to mountainous areas and develop their ability to make short-term forecasts from observed meteorological conditions. Candidates should also have an understanding of:

a. sources of information on weather.

b. elementary interpretation of weather maps.

c. weather developments associated with different air masses, major cloud forms, changes in wind direction and in atmospheric pressure.

d. elementary practical identification of cloud types, wind speeds and temperatures.

7.2 Effects of weather on route selection and level of activity.

8 BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Candidates should have a basic understanding of:

a. the origins, development and ethics of mountaineering within the UK and Ireland.

b. The role of the mountaineering councils, the services they provide and the structure of club and individual membership.

c. The structure of mountain related training within the UK and Ireland and the role of Mountain Leader Training.

d. how to access relevant information from mountaineering and hill walking media e.g. books, guidebooks, magazines, CD ROMs and the internet.

Guidance notes for candidates, trainers and assessors

These guidance notes should be read in conjunction with the relevant sections of the syllabus. Mountain Leader Award courses take place in a variety of mountain environments with their associated hazards. These Award courses are for participants with considerable independent experience. Whilst staff will endeavour to maintain a safe working environment, participants also have a duty to exercise judgement regarding their personal safety and that of other members of the group.

Introduction

These guidance notes are designed to assist in training and assessing by emphasising particular aspects of the syllabus and giving ideas on how best to tackle a particular subject.

The success of a course, be it training or assessment, depends on the contributions made by all involved. It is essential that candidates have a good level of experience before they attend and that trainers and assessors are active mountaineers who are up to date with current practice. There are often many effective solutions to a task and the experience brought to a course by each person will contribute to the range of learning opportunities.

Candidates

Candidates must be experienced hill walkers so that they can grasp all aspects of the training and contribute fully to the course. Candidates should feel free to ask even the simplest questions since these are often the most pertinent. They should keep a course log so that at a later date they can build on the skills learned during the course.

Trainers

Trainers should assist candidates to progress towards assessment. Different candidates benefit from different styles of delivery. Although trainers have a responsibility to work to the ML syllabus, they must also structure their courses to accommodate the varying strengths and weaknesses of candidates. Courses should concentrate on the skills that candidates may have difficulty in learning without expert guidance, whilst not forgetting that in reality the skills of mountain leadership are integrated into an holistic performance. At the end of the course trainers should assist candidates to develop their action plans. It is valuable to review the course programme and the candidates' progress at the end of each day. Candidates should be given individual debriefings and should leave the training course with a good idea of what is required of them during the consolidation period.

Assessors

Assessors evaluate the performance of a candidate against the syllabus requirements. Assessments should enable everyone to perform to the best of their ability under suitably testing mountain conditions. Assessors should ensure that candidates understand the tasks required of them and are given sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their competence. Assessors should remember the importance of an holistic approach to the skills of mountain leadership by limiting the time devoted to single techniques in isolation. Assessors must provide feedback to candidates and should explain how this will be given. An assessor should make a realistic and objective assessment against the nationally recognised standard.

1. Group management and the responsibilities of the group leader

Introduction

It is not possible to separate the skills of party management and leadership from the technical skills and experience that are required by a mountain leader. Candidates should be aware of various styles of leadership applicable to particular situations. During assessment candidates will be expected to demonstrate the ability to lead safely and effectively in a manner that enables the group to be involved, informed and where appropriate, protected.

Candidates

Leadership is not solely being out in front or giving briefings. Candidates should identify the style of leadership they normally adopt and examine why they feel comfortable leading in that particular manner. They should identify other strategies and styles that they might employ to suit different groups and situations. As leaders they should be able to identify what can be achieved by each person in their care and be able to set aims and objectives which ensure that everyone has a good experience.

As a mountain leader candidates should ensure that good practice is followed since they will be seen as a role model by those in their charge and by other hill users. They will have responsibilities to the group, parents, employers and the environment. Some of these will be stated as good practice or rules that govern the organisation for which they are working whilst others are enforceable by law and it is their responsibility to remain aware of these.

It is important for candidates to assess the strengths, weaknesses and requirements of the group and individuals and to carry out detailed planning before undertaking a journey in the mountains.

It is always better for a mountain leader to underestimate rather than overestimate the abilities of those in their charge, especially when dealing with groups that are unknown to them.

It is important to undertake risk assessments for planned journeys and to have contingency plans and strategies for dealing with emergency situations. Candidates should also be able to make unplanned alterations to a journey in response to changing circumstances. As the leader of a group it is important to have an understanding of the stress caused to all concerned by emergency situations.

To ensure that candidates are adequately prepared for their assessment they should seek to gain leadership experience in different circumstances during the consolidation period. This may be either in a formal or informal situation. Examples could include working with an employer's approval, working as an assistant leader alongside a suitably qualified leader or being the most experienced member of a group of friends. True leadership experience comes only from working with groups and cannot be easily simulated. Assessors will expect candidates to respond to given leadership situations in an appropriate manner.

Trainers

Training in leadership needs to be a balance between a theoretical and practical approach to group management and the leader's responsibilities. Teaching of leadership works best if it is integrated into practical skills training rather than using simulations. 'Accident' and 'emergency' exercises may well be used in this context. Trainers should include the more commonplace leadership tasks that occur, e.g. by managing a group over broken terrain encountered as part of a planned journey in the mountains.

Steep ground might provide some of the best opportunities for candidates to role play as group leaders. Candidates' confidence and ability can differ enormously on this sort of terrain, reflecting the variations normally found in walking groups.

Trainers should be well versed in the literature on this aspect, as specified for candidates, in addition to developing their own resources. Trainers should draw on their own and the candidates' experiences to discuss and expand this topic in the classroom and on the hill.

Trainers should ensure that candidates are made aware of the importance of assessing the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the group and planning the journey accordingly. Trainers should discuss with candidates how best to carry out initial preparation and budgeting exercises and how to complete detailed planning before leading day and overnight expeditions into the mountains. As well as consolidating candidates' personal experience and skills, trainers should identify differing styles of leadership e.g. coercive, permissive, co-operative, and outline the characteristics of each. Candidates should be made aware of some of the formal requirements of the planning process such as gaining parental consents, organising insurance and obtaining organisational permissions.

Risk assessments for both accompanied and unaccompanied journeys should be undertaken. In the case of unaccompanied journeys trainers should make the candidates aware of the different methods of supervising groups at a distance, e.g. 'shadowing', designated meetings with a supervisor or written messages left at specific points. Procedures for when and how the group leader or the group might call for assistance should also be discussed. Candidates must be aware that unaccompanied journeys should only be undertaken with suitably experienced groups.

Trainers should provide opportunities to analyse situations as they occur during practical sessions and review exercises, which involve an element of leadership.

Assessors

Assessors should examine the candidate's ability to undertake risk assessments for planned journeys and expeditions and their strategies for dealing with emergency situations. During the practical assessment candidates should be presented with some common emergency situations.

It is difficult to provide genuine leadership situations on assessment. Groups of assessment candidates are not likely to react like a novice party. Assessors should be clear in their own minds as to which aspects of leadership they can assess within the structure of the course. They should carefully consider how they use simulated situations for assessment and should make clear to candidates what is being assessed at any given time. Self evaluation should be encouraged as the scheme depends upon leaders being aware of their strengths and limitations.

Planning skills can initially be assessed with a home or evening written paper but they should not be looked at in isolation from candidates' abilities to lead a group effectively on the hill.

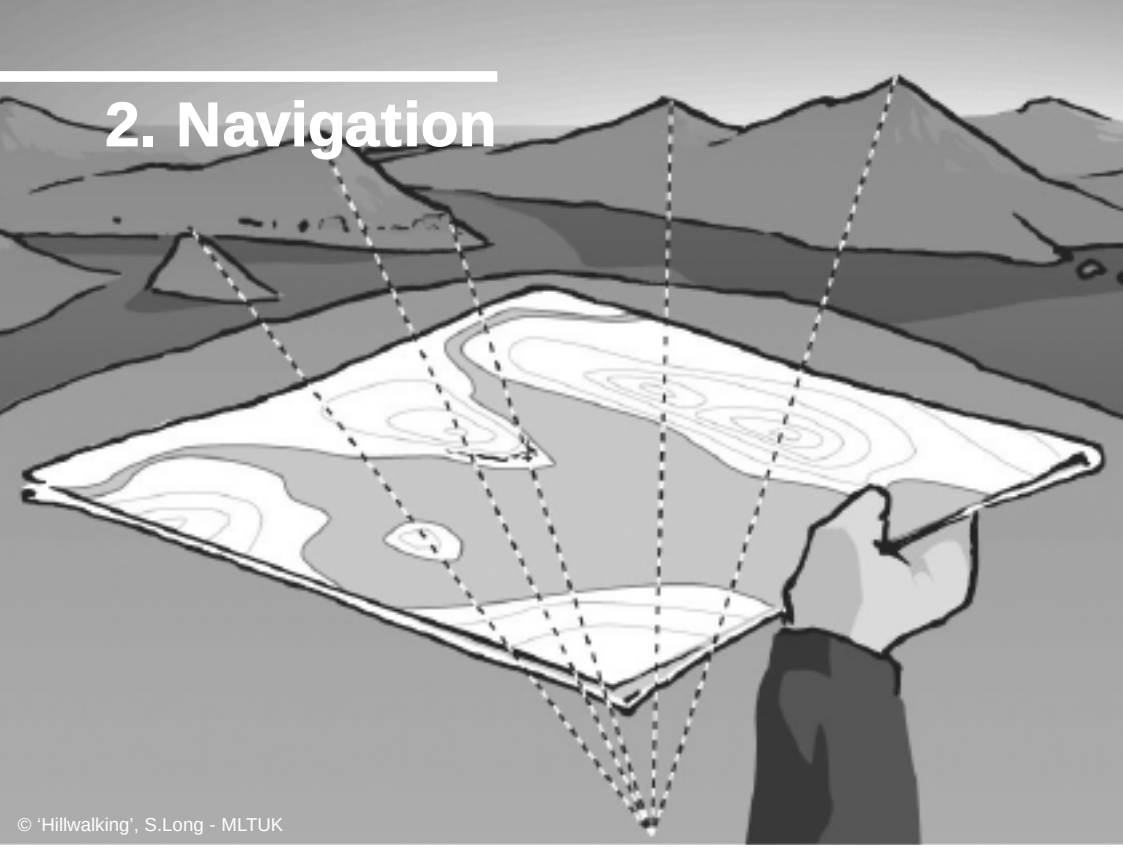
Candidates' understanding of different styles of leadership should be assessed. Candidates should be able to identify the style with which they are most comfortable and be able to make judgements as to when changes of style might be appropriate when leading a group. Assessors should give candidates opportunities to show understanding of the issues surrounding effective management in a variety of mountain situations, including unaccompanied journeys.

Certain aspects of group management, such as pace setting, briefings and communication are relatively easy to evaluate, as are the choice and preparation of personal equipment, selection of routes over varying terrain and reaction to set emergency situations. However judgements about the best course of action for unanticipated situations have to be weighed carefully against possible alternatives. It is common for these situations to be used as further training for the benefit of all concerned.

It can be beneficial to assess candidates operating with near-novice groups. However, great care should be taken to see that no party is adversely affected by the experience. It is possible that an unsatisfactory day could be given to either the candidate or the group; assessors must therefore satisfy themselves as to what is to be gained from this exercise. When working with groups, candidates should be briefed thoroughly and given full charge of the group, thus allowing the development of a proper relationship. The assessor may then act as the assistant leader and only intervene for elements of further training or if the group's safety is in question. It is not generally satisfactory to have more than one candidate involved with a group during any one session. The candidate's role and commitment to the group and the group's reaction to the leader need careful observation; only very experienced assessors should take on this task and even then, the welfare of the group must come first.

Assessors should give daily debriefs, with special regard to leadership aspects. Such sessions will provide a vital platform for discussion and opportunities to compare the perceptions of all parties involved.

2. Navigation



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Candidates

Navigation is a fundamental skill in mountain walking and leaders must be confident of their route no matter how limited the visibility. Candidates' ability as a navigator should allow them to be flexible in their plans and to react to changing conditions. Their navigation should be such that they can navigate efficiently, accurately and confidently while still being able to look after their group, avoid hazards and make the journey interesting.

When preparing for the course candidates should attempt to gain as much experience as possible in navigating across unfamiliar ground. The greater the variety of terrain encountered, the greater the benefit in terms of mountaineering judgement.

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

Navigation involves a range of skills as outlined in the syllabus. Rarely will all of these aspects be required on any single navigation leg. Therefore a large part of the skill of the navigator is the choice of appropriate technique. 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 disoriented and here the technique of walking on a bearing

would be more appropriate. The efficient navigator will adapt the technique to the terrain, the prevailing conditions and the group. The wider and more varied their hill walking experience, the better equipped the candidates will be to make these decisions.

Trainers

Whilst candidates will be expected to be reasonably proficient navigators this may not always be the case. Many experienced walkers have done little navigating in poor weather conditions or have employed only a limited range of techniques. Others may have mainly followed paths and used walking guides.

Teaching all the basic navigation skills will be beneficial. This will be revision for some but could be used as a model for those candidates who are in a position to teach basic navigation to their own groups. Trainers should teach navigation in relation to group leadership, including route selection and party supervision, remembering that candidates must cope with both navigation and leadership issues simultaneously.

Maps of different types and scale should be available during the course. The use of navigation aids such as global positioning systems and altimeters should be discussed. It may be useful to give practical demonstrations of these devices. Candidates should be encouraged to use the appropriate technique at any particular time and also to pay attention to the terrain around them. Part of the training should be allocated to choosing routes over mixed and difficult terrain without the use of a map. Night navigation is often used when no poor visibility navigation has been possible during daylight hours. Trainers may also wish to include night navigation even if poor visibility has been encountered, as it is not uncommon to be walking off the hill in poor light. It should be remembered that on a clear night, navigation might be no more difficult than in daylight.

Navigation should be presented in a structured form so that the candidates can progress throughout the course. The candidates should finish the course being aware of the level of navigation ability required and what they need to do to achieve this.

Assessors

The assessor should structure the tasks to ensure that all relevant navigation techniques are seen. Navigation will be assessed throughout the course so assessors can usually afford to settle candidates by initially setting simple navigation tasks. Assessors need to be certain that any errors are through lack of ability rather than as a result of 'exam nerves' or their own failure to communicate clearly. Very careful and precise briefing of the candidate concerning what is being asked of them is essential. The other candidates must also be briefed about their role while someone else is leading the group.

Candidates should be given time to demonstrate their level of navigation ability to the assessor. They should be allowed to complete the task to the best of their ability and not be pressured into making quick decisions and mistakes. Candidates should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to adopt the appropriate technique for the situation. The assessor should look at the task set from the viewpoint of someone navigating over unfamiliar ground in a stressful situation. A balance must be struck between micro-navigation, often assessed in a moorland situation, and the broader style of navigation used when following a path or defined feature. Micro-navigation can

allow a large number of comparable legs to be set in a relatively short space of time. However, a mountain walk can also provide opportunities to assess navigation while reminding everyone of the nature of the activity. In all cases the elements of party management and group leadership should not be neglected.

Visibility will obviously influence the type of navigation tasks set, as assessors must satisfy themselves that candidates can navigate in the full range of weather conditions. When the weather is good then more accurate navigation can be asked for to compensate for the lack of poor visibility. At these times night navigation may well be required although this is no guarantee of poor visibility. In these situations the skill of the assessor in selecting the appropriate terrain and setting suitable tasks is vital to the success of the assessment. Every navigation task set should help the assessor to draw relevant conclusions about the candidate.

Candidates who make a simple mistake should be given time to resolve the situation. The ability to identify and correct an error is both an essential skill for a mountain leader and an informative process for an assessor.

Navigation ability must be tested with map and compass alone without the use of GPS, altimeter or other similar equipment. If candidates carry navigation aids their ability to use them may be discussed as an additional training element.

3. Access and the environment

Candidates

Candidates are likely to be aware of access and environmental issues in the mountainous areas with which they are familiar. This knowledge should be extended to a broader understanding of issues, including how legislation affects mountaineering and countryside access in each of the home nations. Candidates should make an effort to remain conversant with current legislation. Additionally, the impact of group activities compared with those of an individual should be understood.

Walking is only one of many demands placed upon the mountain environment. Candidates should be aware of other uses, some of which may have conflicting interests. A mountain leader will need to be sensitive to the lives and interests of local residents and familiar with constraints on land owned by different bodies, as meeting these issues for the first time when out with a group can lead to problems. Potential leaders should be fully aware of relevant legislation and local issues.

Careless recreational use of the mountain environment can conflict with conservation interests. Due to the harsh nature of the upland environment habitats are often very fragile and easily disturbed. Candidates must familiarise themselves with current best practice when walking in the mountains and should know enough about the flora and fauna to cause minimal impact, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas. Carelessness resulting in loss of vegetation can quickly lead to soil erosion through run-off and consequent habitat loss.

Important access information is commonly posted at access points and key car parks near popular footpaths. This is often up to date, but may be incomplete and could pose problems for the mountain leader who may have to change plans at the last minute. For this reason candidates should know of sources of information e.g. maps, guidebooks, mountaineering council literature, magazines, websites and key local sources.

Some commonly used paths may not always be Public Rights of Way. Local access agreements may result in permissive paths or path re-routing and all mountain leaders have a duty to respect these arrangements. Certain highly valued areas may have special designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Restrictions, sometimes seasonal, may be associated with these designations and the law protects some designated areas, so infringement may result in prosecution. Mountain leaders must be familiar with these designations and the consequences of any infringements.

The Country Code is designed to minimise the impact of recreational use on the environment and rural communities. This aim should be supported by mountain leaders, who should act in a way that sustains the use of the mountain environment.

Candidates should demonstrate to the parties that they lead an enthusiasm for, and an appreciation of, the environment. They should be aware of the importance of developing knowledge and appreciation of the mountain environment. Whilst there is no expectation that expertise will be developed in all areas (possibilities include flora, fauna, geology and folklore) it is important that the prospective leaders are able to communicate knowledge of their particular area of expertise.

Trainers

Continued use of the mountain environment depends on sensitivity and an awareness of other land use interests. This aspect of the syllabus is therefore fundamental and should be integrated throughout the course as opportunities arise. It is recommended that a discussion session complements the evaluation of practical examples during the course. It is desirable that some venues which specifically highlight environmental issues are selected.

Trainers must be aware of current legislation as it affects the upland and remote areas of the UK. It is common for candidates to have limited personal experience or involvement in these issues and trainers should ensure that candidates leave the course with an understanding of the current legal situation.

Recreational use of upland areas represents only one of the many demands placed upon these environments. These demands may at times conflict and trainers have a responsibility to ensure that candidates have sufficient knowledge to operate without inadvertently creating tension with other land users.

As with any human interference, recreational use of an area threatens the balance of habitats. Upland areas, where the climate is typically severe, are often particularly sensitive to change and opportunities should be built into a course to illustrate the effects of recreational and other upland use. Measures to minimise or control the effects of recreational use should be illustrated during a course.

Mountain leaders may operate in unfamiliar areas. It is therefore essential that they know how to obtain current information about access.

Trainers should ensure that candidates are fully aware of the significance of Rights of Way and access arrangements as shown on maps. They should also appreciate the different legal rights in different areas of the UK.

Many mountainous areas are designated as being of particular environmental or historical value. The implication of these designations should be impressed upon the candidate.
The principles embedded in the Country Code should be integrated throughout the course. The concept of an environmental audit i.e. a consideration of the environmental impact of one's activities, could form a useful part of the course.

It is important that on a training course, staff try to impart knowledge about differing aspects of the mountain environment. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss areas of personal expertise

with the rest of the group and to impart what knowledge they may have. Candidates can be helped to develop the confidence to talk about their knowledge through a positive demonstration by training staff. Guidance may be given on resources available for further development. Mountain Leader Training has developed a sample environmental paper (see appendix 7), which may well be used to demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge.

Assessors

An assessor can gain an understanding of candidates' experience and attitudes towards this crucial aspect of the syllabus by reviewing the logbook and asking follow-up questions. Although a written paper may be of value and provide a stimulus for worthwhile discussion, this aspect lends itself to be evaluated throughout a course either as opportunities arise or as they are engineered by the choice of venue. It is common for a candidate to be asked to prepare a discussion topic and then lead a group session on relevant local or national access and environmental issues.

The criteria applied to the assessment of this area of the syllabus, with its wide range of topics and possible levels of expertise, may need to be flexible. It should, nonetheless, be a clear part of the assessment process and should play a part in any broader assessment decision. Issues of access and the environment are of fundamental importance in effective mountain leadership. Assessors should not hesitate to defer a candidate if they feel that the range of experience demonstrated contributes to a serious lack of awareness of the importance of access and the environment or that the practice of the candidate has, or may have, a negative impact. Assessors may look for knowledge and enthusiasm over a wide range of mountain related subjects but should not expect equal levels of expertise across them all.

A positive attitude to learning and imparting knowledge on the part of the candidate may well be the over-riding concern. The assessment of candidates in this area of the syllabus needs to be flexible and allow for variations in personal interests and depths of knowledge. Mountain Leader Training has developed a sample environmental paper (see appendix 7), which may well help assessors understand the expected standard.

Candidates should be familiar with current legislation that may differ between the home nations.

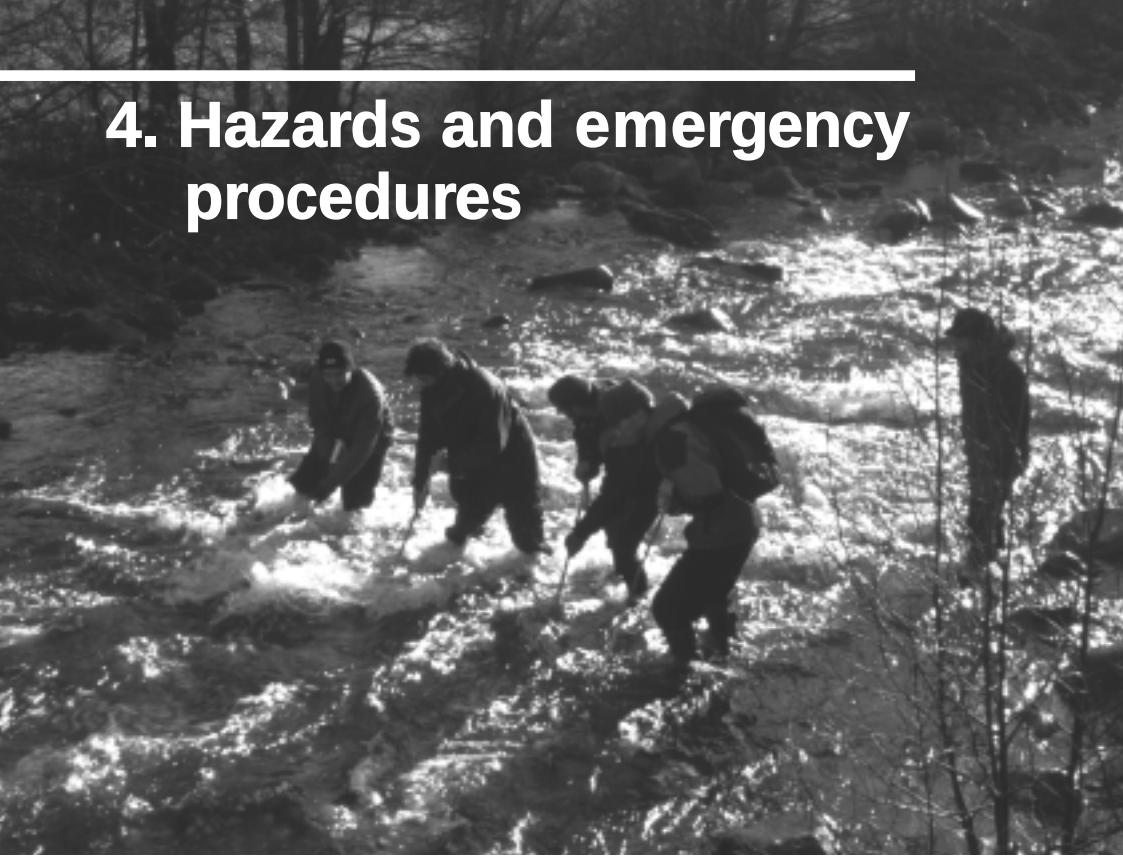
Assessors should be confident that candidates are aware of the other interests, both commercial and recreational, in upland areas. They should be particularly aware of and sensitive to the potential conflict between their own imported values and those of local communities. Assessors must be confident that a candidate in no way jeopardises existing arrangements through insensitive actions.

Recreational pressures may contribute to the loss of access to certain areas as well as a degradation of the physical environment. Assessors should therefore feel free to offer additional training at assessment in this aspect of the syllabus.

Knowledge of sources of current information is vital to planning any route. It is possible to incorporate this in a planning exercise during an assessment course. This would provide opportunities to discuss real situations as they arise and to offer further training.

The implications of the various protection designations should be understood, as should the value of the Country Code.

4. Hazards and emergency procedures



Many mountaineers will encounter an emergency in the hills and a mountain leader should be thoroughly prepared for these situations. It should be understood that emergencies may not be a result of an error on the part of the leader but as a consequence of the increased recreational use of mountain regions.

There are a number of distinct types of hazard that might arise in the mountains. These are best considered under separate headings, although avoiding or dealing with them may involve many of the same principles.

HAZARDS OF STEEP GROUND

Candidates

There is a clear need for mountain leaders to be able to operate safely on steep ground, not necessarily through choice but rather because circumstances have forced them on to such terrain. In these situations candidates must be able to safeguard their group, taking into account the limitations of all concerned. It is difficult to define 'steep ground' exactly but it is generally broken, vegetated slopes with a fair proportion of visible rock, some loose, where the consequences of a slip or fall might be serious.

The need for experience of a wide range of mountain terrain cannot be over emphasised.

Managing a group on a planned journey through steep and broken ground without the use of a rope is an important skill for a mountain leader.

The planned use of the rope is beyond the remit of this award. Leaders intending to use a rope should receive specific training.

Some aspects of providing security with a rope can easily be practised e.g. coiling and uncoiling the rope, knot tying, rope handling and belaying, and candidates should be able to demonstrate these efficiently and safely. The more difficult skills of route choice, anchor selection and attachment require a great deal of practical experience.

Trainers

For many candidates this aspect of the syllabus will be completely new and needs to be taught in a sympathetic manner. The judgements and skills required to lead a group through steep ground without the use of a rope should be covered. The emphasis must be that the use of the rope is for unplanned circumstances e.g. as a result of a navigation mistake or an error of judgement. It should be continually emphasised that this is not rock climbing. Even candidates who are rock climbers may have problems adapting to the use of the rope on its own.

Trainers should draw upon their own experiences to convince candidates, many of whom believe they will never take groups on to steep ground, that there are group management and rope skills, which they can acquire and which may be invaluable one day.

Following an introduction to rope management, knots and their relevant application, a day is generally devoted to putting these skills into practice. It is recommended that emphasis be placed on using these techniques in descent, the most likely situation to occur. Candidates should be able to use the rope to safeguard group members, and themselves, where required, using appropriate techniques, over a short, steep or rocky section of ground. With safety, comfort and educational principles in mind, the terrain chosen should not be intimidating. Whilst there is no one prescribed way of using the rope, the methods taught should be simple, safe and appropriate and a range of techniques should be covered. The candidates should also be sufficiently skilled that they can practise these techniques safely on their own after the training has finished. Ideally this aspect of the syllabus will also be put into the context of a mountain day during the course and not just treated as a 'set-piece' exercise.

The main focus of the day should be the selection and use of anchors, as this requires considerable practice. It is mandatory that this training take place at a ratio of no less than 1 trainer: 4 candidates. Much valuable training can be experienced whilst working in pairs but it should not be forgotten that in reality the leader would often be in charge of a larger group. Relevant situations where the problems of group management can be discussed and demonstrated should be included at some point.

The techniques and skills of dealing with a single group member experiencing difficulties should also be covered. Various methods of giving security, both with and without the rope, should be explored.

The scheme expects proficiency with the rope alone. However, the use of a sling and screw-gate karabiner may be discussed and demonstrated. Note that this must not be used to replace basic rope handling skills but may be an optional extra for suitable candidates.

Assessors

When assessing this aspect of the syllabus the assessor should examine the skills of group management on steep terrain both with and without the use of the rope. While there should be no undue emphasis on this part of the syllabus there should be a number of occasions during the assessment when it can be examined. This must not be in an unduly intimidating situation. Candidates should be able to tackle the problems in a relaxed frame of mind with reasonable amounts of time to complete tasks. The methods demonstrated should be safe, secure, efficient and practical and assessors must recognise that there are usually several acceptable solutions.

Management skills such as the positioning of the group in relation to the leader and the various forms of unroped assistance are valuable to a potential leader and should be examined.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Candidates

Candidates should have an awareness of the major mountain hazards and know how to avoid or deal with them. These could include flooding, lightning, loose rock and rock fall. These are all best avoided through careful planning and observation. Candidates should refer to appropriate literature (see Appendix 3).

Trainers

These subjects are most easily covered in a lecture or tutorial session although they can be referred to at any suitable point during the course. For example, loose rock is a hazard encountered during roped emergencies, while flooding and water hazards are often interrelated.

Assessors

The candidates' understanding of environmental hazards can be examined by means of written questions or by informal discussion throughout the course, especially when relevant situations arise. It may be beneficial to enter hazardous areas intentionally to test the judgement of candidates.

WATER HAZARDS

Candidates

Candidates may have encountered a limited range of water hazards such as stream crossings and dealing with bogs and marshes. The potentially serious nature of other water hazards such as crossing rivers cannot be overemphasised. This aspect of the syllabus requires training under controlled conditions.

Trainers

Water hazards encompass a number of aspects such as dealing with bogs, marshes, streams and rivers. River crossings in particular can be hazardous and the training must reflect this and not be

trivialised, as many candidates will not have experienced the power of even a small stream. The value of sound preparation before attempting any river crossing should be stressed. Training should be a combination of theoretical and practical work with the emphasis firmly on avoiding water hazards, especially river crossings. Allowing the candidates to experience the power of a current to reinforce the serious nature of river crossings should be an important part of this session. Trainers must bear in mind the difficulties of safeguarding candidates in moving water.

Assessors

This aspect of the syllabus can be assessed through both written and oral questions and by practical demonstrations, for which group activity is acceptable. Attention should be given to hazard avoidance, sound preparation and a thorough understanding of the techniques and dangers of river crossing. Both roped and unroped methods of river crossing should be considered. It may be appropriate to deliver further training in river crossing once it has been established that candidates have an understanding of the potential dangers.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Candidates

Emergency situations may develop from accidents or from errors of judgement. Leaders will experience extra pressures when something goes wrong. Therefore they should be clear about suitable responses to any given emergency on a mountain journey.

Trainers

Accident and emergency procedures should be covered in detail. The candidates should be taught methods of search and evacuation. They should also be taught improvised rescue techniques so they could deal with a minor evacuation if necessary. The skills, group management and equipment essential for spending an unplanned night out on a mountain should also be covered.

Assessors

Emergency procedures can be assessed by a combination of written and oral examination and practical work. Assessors should accept that there might be different solutions to examination situations. This area lends itself to discussion, particularly in groups, when differences of opinion may arise and can be used for the benefit of all candidates.

Assessors should be confident about the candidates' knowledge and ability regarding accident procedure and their responses to emergency situations. Candidates should exercise reasonable judgement and an awareness of the consequences of any particular course of action.

5. Equipment

The use of appropriate equipment can greatly increase the overall safety and enjoyment for a group. Candidates, trainers and assessors will be aware that a huge variety of equipment is currently available. However when it comes to considering what is 'appropriate', any decision has to balance objectives, aspirations, economics and equipment availability .

Candidates

Candidates should be able to demonstrate the suitability of their own equipment and clothing, particularly in cold or wet weather. They should be able to choose, carry and use the appropriate equipment for the prevailing conditions. They should also have an understanding of currently available equipment and be able to advise others on its suitability.

Trainers

It is important to spend some time examining and discussing equipment needs with candidates. Candidates should be aware that their equipment has implications for the safety and comfort of themselves and of their group. If a candidate does not have suitable equipment, trainers should be able to offer constructive advice and discuss available options. It may be appropriate for trainers to demonstrate their own personal and group equipment, discussing items that they or other trainers may elect to carry.

Candidates should be encouraged to travel light, yet must also be able to deal with emergency situations. Informal discussions offer excellent opportunities to show candidates the wide variety of equipment that is available. Trainers should ensure that all candidates have an understanding of and ability to use the equipment they will need as leaders and the depth of knowledge required to advise others.

Assessors

An assessment course provides many opportunities to examine the suitability of each candidate's personal equipment. Equipment should be examined with regard to safety, comfort and efficiency, allowing for personal opinion that will have been developed over previous months or years. Candidates need to be able to operate as party leaders in poor conditions and choice of personal equipment will have a bearing on their ability to do this.

Candidates' knowledge of various types of equipment requires examination, especially with regard to their recommendations to others. Opportunities to do this may be provided in a written paper.

6. Expedition skills

Candidates

Expeditions incorporate many aspects of hill walking including the important but simple act of living in the hills. Innumerable opportunities to practise and develop personal and group skills occur while away from civilisation for extended periods. It is for these reasons that expeditions are included in the scheme.

The scheme requires experience of wild camping and the ability to organise and carry out a multi-day expedition. It should not be a physical endurance test, although the ability to carry sufficient food and equipment to be self-contained for up to three days is required. Experience should be gained in a variety of terrain and weather conditions, together with the practised use of the more common items of equipment.

During training the expedition provides many opportunities for learning: from the trainer, from other candidates and from personal experience. Campcraft is important for reasons of safety, hygiene and the environment. However the ability to be self-reliant and deal with mountain conditions for an extended period of time and the sheer enjoyment of remote camping are equally important reasons for including an expedition in the syllabus. Candidates should be familiar with current equipment, suitable for their own use and for novice groups. The principle of carrying sufficient to be comfortable, but not so much that the weight becomes a burden should be applied by the candidate and also to the novices for whom they will one day be responsible.

On a short expedition the calorific value of food is more relevant than its nutritional balance. Other factors that should be considered include: the convenience with which it can be carried and eaten, the quantity of fuel required for cooking, the ease and rate of digestion and the need for a high fluid intake. The choice of stove has a significant impact, not only on the weight carried, but also on the style of cooking that will be possible. Candidates should therefore familiarise themselves with different stoves and have knowledge of the common hazards when lighting, extinguishing and re-fuelling them and means of managing these hazards. A mountain leader may be responsible for groups of novices when camping and therefore must be able to organise a site and anticipate issues that may arise. This relates not only to basic safety procedures but also to food preparation and cooking as well as water sources and toilet practices; both extremely important issues, which may have an impact on future visitors as well as on the group itself.

Trainers

Training courses must contain at least a one-night/two-day mountain journey of an absolute minimum of 24 hours duration. The candidates should be self-sufficient, carrying all personal and group requirements. The expedition provides the opportunity for the trainer to share an intensive period of time with the candidates in the mountain environment. This should present numerous opportunities to train all aspects of the syllabus in context, building on the learning that has taken place during other elements of the course. Perhaps most importantly, the expedition should provide the opportunity to enjoy mountaineering at its best, away from roads and the constraints of everyday living, in a situation where the need for self-reliance and personal responsibility is paramount.

A mountain leader should be able to advise a novice about equipment for undertaking mountain journeys in the UK. Trainers should therefore make every effort to provide a wide range of equipment for candidates to use during the course. Although candidates will frequently wish to provide their own equipment, it is important that they also have the opportunity to evaluate other equipment.

Even where candidates have some experience of going on expedition, the basic skills of packing and carrying should be addressed. Many candidates assume that a well prepared leader carries equipment to cater for every eventuality, whereas in reality this can result in being overburdened and therefore less effective as a leader. Modern lightweight equipment has its advantages, but if unavailable it should not result in a candidate carrying an excessively heavy load. Candidates should be encouraged to work as a team and carry essential group equipment between them.

During a short expedition food should provide energy, be light to carry, require minimal fuel to cook and be enjoyable to eat. Trainers should ensure that candidates have some basic nutritional knowledge, including an understanding of the significant difference between simple sugars and complex carbohydrates. Candidates' preferences can provide the basis for a discussion on suitable food. Some courses provide expedition rations, some require the candidates to provide their own food, while others provide a budget and integrate planning and purchase into the course itself.

Candidates must develop an awareness of the difference between food that is appropriate for

personal use and that which is suitable for novices, who may be cooking on stoves for the first time. Food preparation and hygiene should be considered.

A training course should provide the opportunity for candidates to use a range of stoves. The safety aspects relating to the use of different stoves and fuels must be considered, as must the serious issues of stove use near tents.

The combined experience of candidates may be used as the basis for a discussion on campsites. Until extremes have been experienced, the vagaries of mountain weather may well be underestimated, leading to a false sense of security in fine conditions. Issues of hygiene, toilet practices and water availability, as well as the discreet location of tents, should also be discussed.

Other forms of mountain shelter should be discussed. A bothy, bivi or mountain hut could be included, in addition to a one-night camp, to extend the mountain experience of candidates. A bivouac is not an essential element of a ML training course, but the ability and confidence to bivi (either planned or unplanned) is a useful mountain skill and many candidates would benefit from the experience.

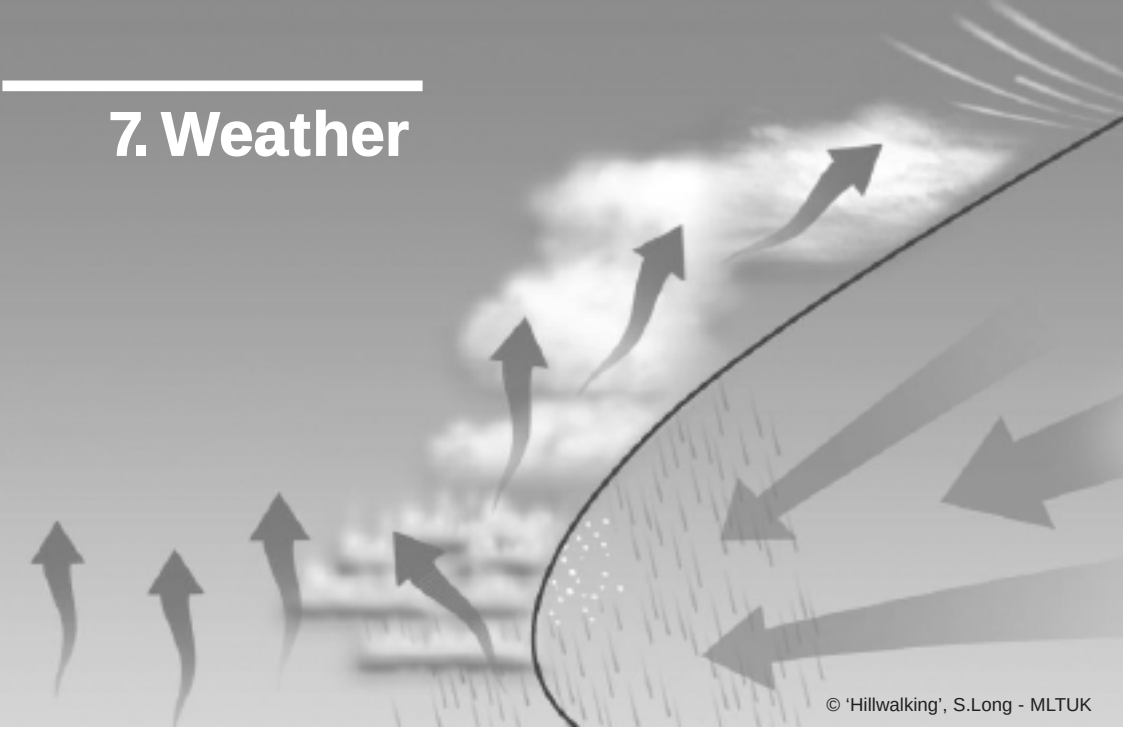
Assessors

Assessment courses should contain at least a two-night, three-day mountain journey of an absolute minimum of 48 hours duration. As well as demonstrating an ability to be self-reliant for consecutive days, the expedition places candidates in continuous contact with the mountain environment, creating numerous opportunities to explore all elements of the syllabus.

Candidates would usually be expected to arrive with all the necessary equipment for the expedition. Although each individual should be self sufficient, it is likely that candidates will be able to rationalise group equipment. Many leaders are tempted to carry equipment for every eventuality. However, it is important to encourage a common sense approach in order to minimise the load carried thus helping to make the expedition a constructive experience. The food and equipment candidates choose for themselves may provide an insight for the assessor, but it should also be remembered that a mountain leader would be responsible for advising novices about selection and use of stoves, tents and other expedition equipment.

Candidates should be aware of the existence of alternatives to camping in the mountains of the UK and Ireland. It is possible that the assessment expedition might utilise one of these alternatives for one of the nights in circumstances where this is beneficial e.g. in extreme weather or an improvised bivi when walking at night away from previously pitched tents.

7. Weather



© 'Hillwalking', S.Long - MLTUK

Candidates

An understanding of weather and weather forecasting is fundamental to the safe enjoyment of the mountains. Difficulties are often related to an ignorance or misinterpretation of weather and weather forecasts, which could lead to encountering worse conditions than anticipated. Conversely, a good understanding of weather can often allow an enjoyable day to be had in spite of an unpromising start.

Candidates should be familiar with the information provided on weather maps available from the media. Bearing in mind that forecasts are usually for sea-level conditions, their relevance should be considered and candidates should attempt to understand how they relate to the mountain environment.

Trainers

Trainers must be aware that weather is an important subject that has to be pitched at the correct level for the candidates. The trainer should identify the basic level of knowledge required to enable the candidates to make appropriate judgements based on commonly available information. This can be achieved through lectures, tutorials and seminars and by directing candidates to suitable material.

Additionally, it is recommended that this topic be integrated within the course on a daily basis using practical observation. Forecasts and synoptic charts should be used and compared with the local weather conditions. Interpretation and forecasting based on weather signs and patterns illustrate the practical application of this aspect of the syllabus.

Assessors

Weather knowledge might be assessed through written and oral examination including the use of home papers. Asking candidates to make daily interpretations of the weather at the start of the day and then reinforcing this on the hill emphasises and places in context the relevance of weather prediction. The assessor should be confident that candidates are able to understand how to access all the commonly available types of weather forecast and be able to evaluate their relative accuracy and reliability. They should also understand those weather forecasts and understand how mountains may affect the prevailing weather systems. Finally they should be able to integrate their understanding of the likely weather conditions into their planning as mountain leaders.

8. Background knowledge

Candidates

Candidates should be able to assist novices to participate in hill walking. They should be aware of clubs and organisations available and have access to relevant literature. A leader should be aware of the ethics and traditions of mountaineering and of how hill walking is an integral part of this. An understanding of where to obtain information on access and other related topics is important.

Trainers

Trainers should introduce candidates to a variety of resources to enable them to expand their understanding of the development of mountaineering and hill walking. They should also introduce candidates to the role of Mountaineering Councils and the Training Boards and of how they work with other agencies that have interests in the mountains. This can be achieved through lectures and an integrated approach throughout the course.

Assessors

Assessors must be confident that candidates operate in a suitably sensitive way in order to avoid conflict between their activities and those of other hill users.

Candidates' overall knowledge of the development of the activity and roles of National Bodies should be investigated. This can be achieved through a variety and combination of ways, e.g. home papers, discussion or set course papers.

Appendix 1
Mountainous Country, Quality Mountain Days and Wild Camping

1.1 Mountainous Country

For the purposes of the scheme, mountainous country is defined as wild country where walkers are dependent upon themselves and remote from any immediate help. In the United Kingdom and Ireland this can be found in areas such as:

United Kingdom

Antrim Hills
Black Mountains
Brecon Beacons
Cheviots
Dartmoor
Galloway Hills
Highlands and Islands of Scotland
Lake District Mountains of Mourne
Mountains of North and Mid Wales
North Yorkshire Moors
Peak District and Northern Moors
Pennines

Republic of Ireland

Blackstairs
Commeragh / Slievenamon Cuilcagh
Dublin / Wicklow Mountains
Galty Mountains
Knockmealdowns
Mountains of Cork
Mountains of Galway
Mountains of Sligo
Slieve Bloom Hills

1. 2 Quality Mountain Days

In terms of experience, the quality of a mountain day lies in such things as the conditions experienced both overhead and underfoot, the exploration of new areas, the terrain covered and the physical and mental challenge. Such days make a positive contribution towards a person's development and maturity as an all round mountaineer.

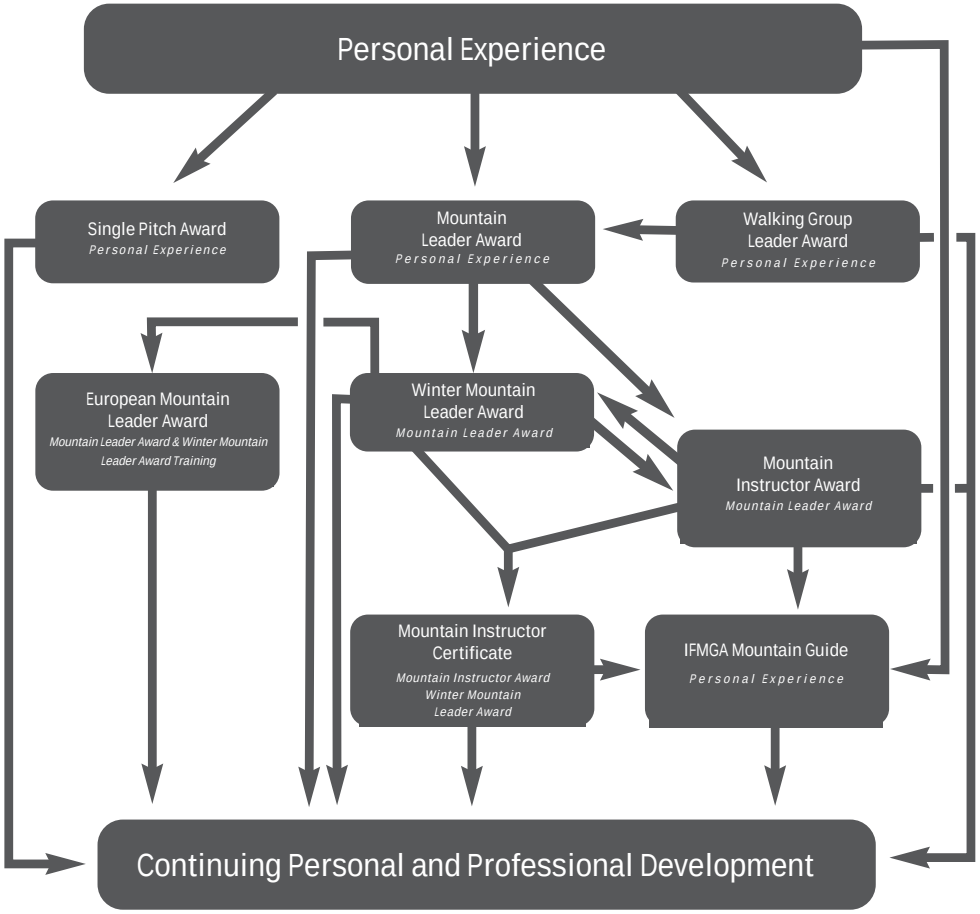
Usually some or all of the following criteria would be fulfilled:

- the individual takes part in the planning and leadership.
- navigation skills are required away from marked paths.
- experience must be in terrain and weather comparable to that found in UK and Irish hills.
- knowledge is increased and skills practised.
- attention is paid to safety.
- the journey is five hours or more.
- adverse conditions may be encountered.
- ascent of a substantial peak would normally be included in the day.

1.3 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.

Appendix 2
Mountaineering Awards of the UK



Text in italics indicates prerequirement qualifications at entry.

Appendix 3
Bibliography

The following publications, whilst not an exhaustive list, are all relevant to the syllabus:

General

Hillwalking . . . . . Steve Long/MLTUK
Mountaincraft and Leadership . . . . . Langmuir
Safety on Mountains; Video and Book . . . . . BMC/ MLTB

The following publications are relevant to specific syllabus headings:

1. Leadership.

Leading and Managing Groups in the Outdoors . . . . . Ken Ogilvie
Adventure Alternative . . . . . Colin Mortlock.
Adventure Education . . . . . J C Miles & S Priest.
Managing Risk in Outdoor Activities . . . . . C Haddock
Outdoors with Young People - A Leader's Guide to
Outdoor Activities, the Environment and Sustainability . . . . . G Cooper

2. Navigation.

Mountain Navigation . . . . . P Cliff.
Land Navigation . . . . . W Keay
Teaching Orienteering . . . . . MacNeill,Cory-Wright & Renfrew.
The Art of Outdoor Navigation; CD-ROM . . . . . Martyn Hurn.
Interactive Map Explore, CD-ROM . . . . . Ordnance Survey.

3. Access and Conservation.

The Country Code . . . . . HMSO
Northern Ireland Country Code . . . . . Countryside Access and Activities Network
Tread Lightly . . . . . BMC
Where to 'Go' in the Great Outdoors . . . . . MCofS
Outdoor Trainers Environmental Resource pack . . . . . MLTE/MTT
How to Shit in the Woods . . . . . K Meyer
Heading for the Scottish Hills . . . . . MCofS & Scottish
Landowners Federation. . . . . SMT
New Naturalists Series . . . . . Fontana/Collins

4. Mountain Hazards and Emergency procedures.

Medical handbook for Walkers and Climbers . . . . . P Steele
Medicine for Mountaineers . . . . . Wilkinson
Dealing with Water Hazards in the Mountains . . . . . MTT
Water Hazards for Mountaineers Video . . . . . MCofS
Mountain and Cave Rescue . . . . . MRC

5 & 6 Equipment and Expedition Skills

Expedition Guide . . . . . D of E Scheme

7. Weather.

Weather for Hillwalkers and Climbers . . . . . M Thomas
Mountain Weather . . . . . Pedgley

8. Background Knowledge.

The Big Walks . . . . . K Wilson/R Gilbert.
Classic Walks . . . . . K Wilson/R Gilbert

Magazines

High Mountain Sports
Trail
The Great Outdoors (TGO)
Climber

Council Publications

Summit . . . . . BMC
The Scottish Mountaineer . . . . . MCofS
The Irish Mountain Log . . . . . MCI
National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders . . . . . MLTUK
The websites of Mountain Leader Training and the mountaineering councils.

Appendix 4
Mountain Leader Training and Mountaineering Councils

The prime aim of the four home nation boards of Mountain Leader Training is to promote awareness of mountain safety through formal leader training schemes. These include the Walking Group Leader Award, Mountain Leader Award, the MLTS' Winter Mountain Leader Award and the Single Pitch Award for climbers leading and supervising groups.

Mountain Leader Training UK promotes and co-ordinates the four home nation Boards in the provision of this training and is responsible for the Mountain Instructor Scheme and the European Mountain Leader Award. MLTUK also maintains a centralised national mountain training database, which provides a record of qualifications for mountain leaders, instructors and guides throughout the UK.

The mountaineering councils are the representative bodies for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers and work to promote their interests and protect their freedoms. They provide a wide range of services for members and hold regular area meetings.

Mountain Leader Training United Kingdom (MLTUK)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ET
Tel: 01690 720272 Fax: 01690 720248 E-mail: info@mltuk.org
Website: www.mltuk.org

Mountain Leader Training England (MLTE)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ET
Tel: 01690 720314 Fax: 01690 720248 E-mail: info@mlte.org
Website: www.mlte.org

Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland (MLTNI)
Tollymore Mountain Centre, Bryansford, Newcastle, Co Down BT33 0PT
Tel: 028 4372 2158 Fax: 028 4372 6155 E-mail: admin@tollymoremc.com
Website: www.tollymoremc.com

Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS)
Glenmore, Aviemore, Inverness-shire PH22 1QU.
Tel: 01479 861248 Fax: 01479 861249 E-mail: smltb@aol.com
Website: www.mltuk.org

Mountain Leader Training Wales/Hyfforddi Arweinwyr Mynydd Cymru (MLTW)
Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ET
Tel: 01690 720361 Fax: 01690 720248 Email: info@mltw.org
Website: www.mltw.org

British Mountaineering Council (BMC)
177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB
Tel: 08700104878 Fax: 0161 445 4500 Email: office@thebmc.co.uk
Website: www.thebmc.co.uk

Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI)
House of Sport, Longmile Rd, Dublin 12, Ireland
Tel: 00 3531 450 7376 Fax: 00 3531 450 2805 Email: mci@eircom.net
Website: www.mountaineering.ie

Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MC of S)
The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 638227 Fax: 01738 442095 Email: info@mountaineering-scotland.org.uk
Website: www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk

Sample Programmes

Training Course Programmes

The design of a training course programme should be based on training a group of candidates in the more challenging elements of the ML syllabus. The course should also provide opportunities to consolidate and build on the skills candidates already possess. The programme should reflect the dual responsibility of the trainer to the candidate and to the syllabus.

Training course programmes can take many forms. Some Providers prefer to use the six-day continuous format, but the Training Boards support and encourage a variety of flexible programmes. Examples include:

- four weekends
- two weekends with a third long weekend
- three weekends with a series of evening sessions

Trainers should bear in mind the value of the residential experience, enabling more intensive concentration on the issues being trained. This should also be balanced against the fact that a split course delivery over a series of weekends allows candidates to consolidate skills and prepare more fully for each subsequent weekend during the intervening periods.

It is up to each Provider to combine the elements of the syllabus in a way that suits the particular circumstances of their course: the nature of the group, the valley base, length of day, prevailing weather conditions, etc.

All courses require approval by Mountain Leader Training and will comprise a minimum of sixty hours contact time, the majority of which should be dedicated to practical activities in the mountains.

During the training course many candidates may be venturing off paths and away from familiar terrain for the first time and trainers should ensure that this opportunity to illustrate the full potential of the mountains is not wasted. The majority of a training course should take place in context, rather than as a series of short set-piece technical sessions close to the road.

Although the emphasis will be on practical mountain-based training, a training programme should include time for planning and reviewing activities. These are essential elements of the plan-do-review cycle without which, much of the value of the training may be lost.

As the training course represents only a fraction of the time that a candidate will spend developing their skills and experience, trainers should assist candidates with recognising their own learning needs. This may take the form of daily reviews or the provision of a personal training log to assist each candidate in making realistic assessments of their own strengths and weaknesses, thereby identifying what additional experience they might need.

The cycle of activity on a typical ML training course day is illustrated below.

Morning

- Weather check - discuss with candidates, place on display throughout the course to show any changing patterns as they emerge.
- Session introduction and venue briefing - allow for questions, packing time and gear collection/rationalisation
- Environmental audit for the day - travel, parking, other users, physical impact etc.

Daytime

- Travel to venue.
- Training session - ensure that the techniques are in context - refer to leadership, environment, other users.
- End of session - travel, unwind.

Evening

- Review session - trainer and/or candidate-led. With or without prompt sheet or use of action planning document.
- Trainer available for follow-up questioning.
- Briefing for next session as appropriate.
- Session(s) delivering underpinning knowledge, which can be built on each day during practical work.

Due to the holistic approach to training, some of the syllabus elements will be addressed on more than one day or session.

Assessment Course Programmes

The design of an assessment course programme should allow candidates enough time to demonstrate to the assessors that they have attained the required level of competence in each of the elements of the ML syllabus, without experiencing undue pressure. Candidates should demonstrate that they are able to lead groups in the mountains over a variety of terrain and in good and adverse weather conditions.

Assessment course programmes can take a limited number of forms, either a five or six-day continuous format, or two three day blocks. It is up to each Provider to combine the elements of the syllabus to suit the particular circumstances of their course e.g. the valley base, length of day, prevailing weather conditions.

All courses require approval from Mountain Leader Training and will comprise a minimum of sixty hours contact time, the majority of which will be dedicated to practical activity. Although both home papers and theory tests may be used as part of the assessment process, work done by candidates prior to the commencement of the course will not normally be considered as part of the course hours.

The majority of the assessment should take place in the mountains on terrain that is challenging to the candidates. As far as possible an holistic approach to the syllabus should be taken with opportunities to assess differing syllabus areas during a mountain journey. While some of the syllabus areas such as use of a rope for security on steep ground might initially be assessed in specific locations, the assessors must ensure that they see the candidate perform and make judgements in the mountain context.

Assessment tasks should be progressive and allow the candidate to settle into the assessment pattern. It is suggested that the practical assessment begins with navigation in a relatively straightforward area rather than immediately moving onto steep and broken ground.

A minimum of two assessors must see each candidate during the assessment course. Assessors should keep a written record of candidates' performances during each day and the assessment team should hold a daily review session. This ensures that every assessor has an overview of each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Assessors should also be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate's logbook, written papers and any areas that require follow-up actions during the assessment.

The cycle of activity on a typical ML assessment day is illustrated below

Morning

- Weather check and briefing - delegate to candidates, placed on display throughout the course to show the changing pattern as it evolves.
- Session and venue briefing - allow for questions, packing time and gear collection/rationalisation.
- Environmental audit for the day - travel, parking, other users, physical impact etc.

Daytime

- Travel to venue.
- Assessment session - ensure that the techniques are in context - refer to leadership, environment, other users in all sessions where appropriate.
- End of session - travel, individual debriefs for the day, unwind.

Evening:

- Review and debrief sessions.
- Assessor available for follow-up questioning.
- Briefing for next session as appropriate.
- Theory papers or discussions.

Due to the holistic approach to assessment, some of the syllabus elements will be addressed on more than one day or session.

Appendix 6
Provider Guidance

Mountain Leader Training has established procedures for approving organisations or individuals as ML Providers. This approval is to run specific award training and assessment courses and should not be regarded as authorisation or validation for other activities. The Boards consider a number of factors when considering Provider applications. Applications should be made to the home country MLT in which the provider or candidates reside.

Catchments.

A potential Provider must demonstrate a specific catchment of training and assessment candidates. ML courses are not normally closed courses restricted to a single cohort and so strategies for widening the intake should be in place.

Programme.

MLT will consider a number of formats as suitable for ML course provision but both training and assessment courses must involve a minimum contact time of sixty hours.
For training courses - a continuous six-day course; two three-day blocks or three extended weekends within a maximum three-month period are all formats that have been approved by MLT.
For assessment courses - a continuous series of five or six days or two extended weekends completed within a one-month period.

Both training and assessment courses should be separately identifiable and not broken up within a longer scheme of more general training or assessment such as a twelve month college course. All MLT schemes require separate, scheme specific, registrations and candidates must take personal responsibility for registering with the ML scheme before attending a training course . A course Provider is entitled to turn away candidates who have not registered or do not have the appropriate experience. The nominated Course Director is responsible for ensuring that candidates meet the pre-requirements.
Training and assessment courses should have different course directors if a single Provider runs them on the same dates.

Staff Qualifications.

The MIA with Winter ML is the minimum qualification for directing training courses; MIC is the minimum for assessment. At the time of application the Board will consider both personal and training experience and attendance at Board training events. In order to deliver ML scheme Courses Directors are required to have considerable experience of the delivery of MLT courses.

Trainers and Assessors.

All staff working on ML courses must hold at least ML. They should be mature and with a good, all-round knowledge of mountaineering and a considerable involvement in the leading and teaching of others. This guidance need not apply to specialists who may be introduced to a course to give some specific input but who do not have responsibility for candidates during practical sessions.
Attendance at a MLT workshop every three years is mandatory for Providers and their Course Directors. Staff should also be encouraged to attend these events.

Staffing ratios and Candidate numbers.

ML training courses; maximum ratio 1:6 (1:4 for steep ground training). Minimum number of candidates; four. For assessment courses the ratio is 1:4 throughout.

All training candidates should work with more than one trainer during the course and all assessment candidates should be assessed by more than one member of assessment staff. Mountain Leader Training expects that, as a minimum, the Director of the course will spend a full day with every candidate on the course. Larger courses improve exchange of information and ensure a wide range of views and experiences. It should be remembered that over-large courses will need to work in smaller, discrete groups to avoid congestion of venues.

Moderation.

Mountain Leader Training scrutinises details of all course reports and will visit one third of the approved providers running courses.

Appendix 7
Model Mountain Environment Written Paper

The questions set out below have been prepared by a group of ML trainers and assessors with the assistance of individuals within the national parks, National Trust, national conservation bodies and the mountaineering councils. They all feel that mountain leaders should be able to score fifty percent on this particular paper. Brief, one or two line answers are all that would be required and for definitive answers contact any ML Course Provider.

The assessors of this scheme have a number of ways of enabling candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and may well choose other techniques such as setting research papers before the actual course or by asking direct questions while out on the hills. Whatever method is chosen this model paper should help everyone understand the standards required for this element of the training and assessment scheme.

The questions have been grouped into three sections: Access, Conservation and Appreciation of the Environment. Some aspects are required knowledge while others may be specific interests. For example, it is more important that a leader knows something about their right of access to land under the new legislation when compared to knowing the Latin name for Butterwort. The inter-relationship between these areas is also important and assessors will endeavour to examine the candidates overall appreciation for the mountain environment (a difficult thing to define in a written paper). The balance therefore will not necessarily be weighted towards a specific interest at the cost of broader issues.

The law on access is very different in England and Wales to Scotland and Northern Ireland and while some country-specific questions are asked, for other questions candidates should be clear to which country/ies their answer applies. The Mountain Leader scheme is a national award and it is important that the level of knowledge reflects this. Assessment will not be specific to a region nor to one particular aspect of this part of the syllabus.

MODEL MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT PAPER FOR ML

1. You are leading a group along a public right of way and have been approached by the landowner and asked to leave, what do you do? (3)

2. Briefly describe the differences between Rights of Way in England and Wales to those in Scotland and Northern Ireland. (2)

3. Briefly describe the access provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill 2003. (3)

4. Briefly describe the significance of the CRoW Act (2000). (3)

5. Name the three mountaineering organisations responsible for access negotiations in the UK. (3)

6. Who owns land within any of the National Parks in England and Wales?. (3)

7. Name the most recent upland area to be designated a National Park. (1)

8. The National Trust and National Trust for Scotland own large areas of upland.
a. List three aims of these organisations. (3)
b. List three other significant owners of upland areas in the UK. (3)

9. Apart from tourism and recreation name four other types of land use in upland areas. (4)

10. List any six of the twelve items in the Country Code. (3)

11. To what does 'the glorious twelfth' relate and when is it? (1)

12. Name three sources of information you would use when researching access to an unfamiliar area. (3)

13. One of the most common causes of conflict between landowners and recreational users is control of dogs. Why is this and what advice would you give to your group? (3)

14. Give two reasons why access to upland areas may be temporarily restricted. (2)

15. Name the government agencies responsible for conservation in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. (4)

16. Name two organisations that use volunteers to assist with their upland conservation aims. (2)

17. Name four designations that government can award in order to give wild landscapes a degree of protection. (4)

18. What is ACT and what is its role? (2)

19. List three badly eroded upland paths and describe how you could help control further erosion. (3)

20. How can Mountain Leaders make a positive contribution towards conserving the environment for the future? (3)

21. You are planning an overnight camp in a remote mountain location. How would you minimise the impact? (3)

22. What issues do you need to consider when advising your group on sanitary matters and human waste disposal in the mountains? (3)

23. What, if any, bio-degradable material would you leave in the hills and if so how would you leave it? (3)

24. Describe what the main differences in landscape would be if you visited the hills of Britain and Ireland six thousand years ago. (3)

25. When did the last ice-age come to an end? (1)
a. 10 000 years ago
b. 50 000 years ago
c. 100 000 years ago

26. Name and describe three glacial features that can be found in the mountains of the UK. (3)

27. List three types of rock and for each name an upland area in the UK where this rock type is the major influence on the landscape. (3)

28. How is peat formed? (2)

29. Name three plants commonly found in or around wet/boggy areas of upland. (3)

30. Purple Saxifrage and Mountain Avens are examples of arctic alpine plants. Our climate differs from most alpine regions; why can these plants still be found in our mountains? (3)

31. Name two upland plants that are susceptible to over grazing. (2)

32. Name three types of native tree found in the uplands of Britain and Ireland. (3)

33. Name and describe two upland plants that can easily be recognised by their scent. (2)

34. Name an upland bird that:
i) Occasionally flies upside down (1)
ii) Eats other birds (1)
iii) Is a threatened species (1)

35. Name two animals in the UK uplands that change their appearance depending on the time of year. (2)

36. Name a reptile, an insect and a microbe that could be a hazard to hill walkers. (3)

Note: There are a total of one hundred marks available on this paper.

This paper was compiled with help from:
Mark Baker, Rob Collister, Malcolm Creasey, Mike Dales, Del Davies, Martin Doyle, John Ellis Roberts, Trevor Fisher, Carlo Forte, Allen Fyffe, Rod Gritten, Hugo Iffla, Barbara Jones, Elfyn Jones, Graham Lynch, Andy Newton, George Reid, Andy Say, Lun Roberts and Louise Thomas.

Mountain Leader Training Contact Details

Mountain Leader Training England

MLTE, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy, LL24 0ET
t: 01690 720314
f: 01690 720248
e: info@mlte.org
w: www.mlte.org

Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland

MLTNI, Tollymore M.C. Bryansford, Newcastle Co Down BT33 OPT
t: 028 4372 2158
f: 028 4372 6155
e: admin@tollymoremc.com
w: www.tollymoremc.com

Mountain Leader Training Scotland

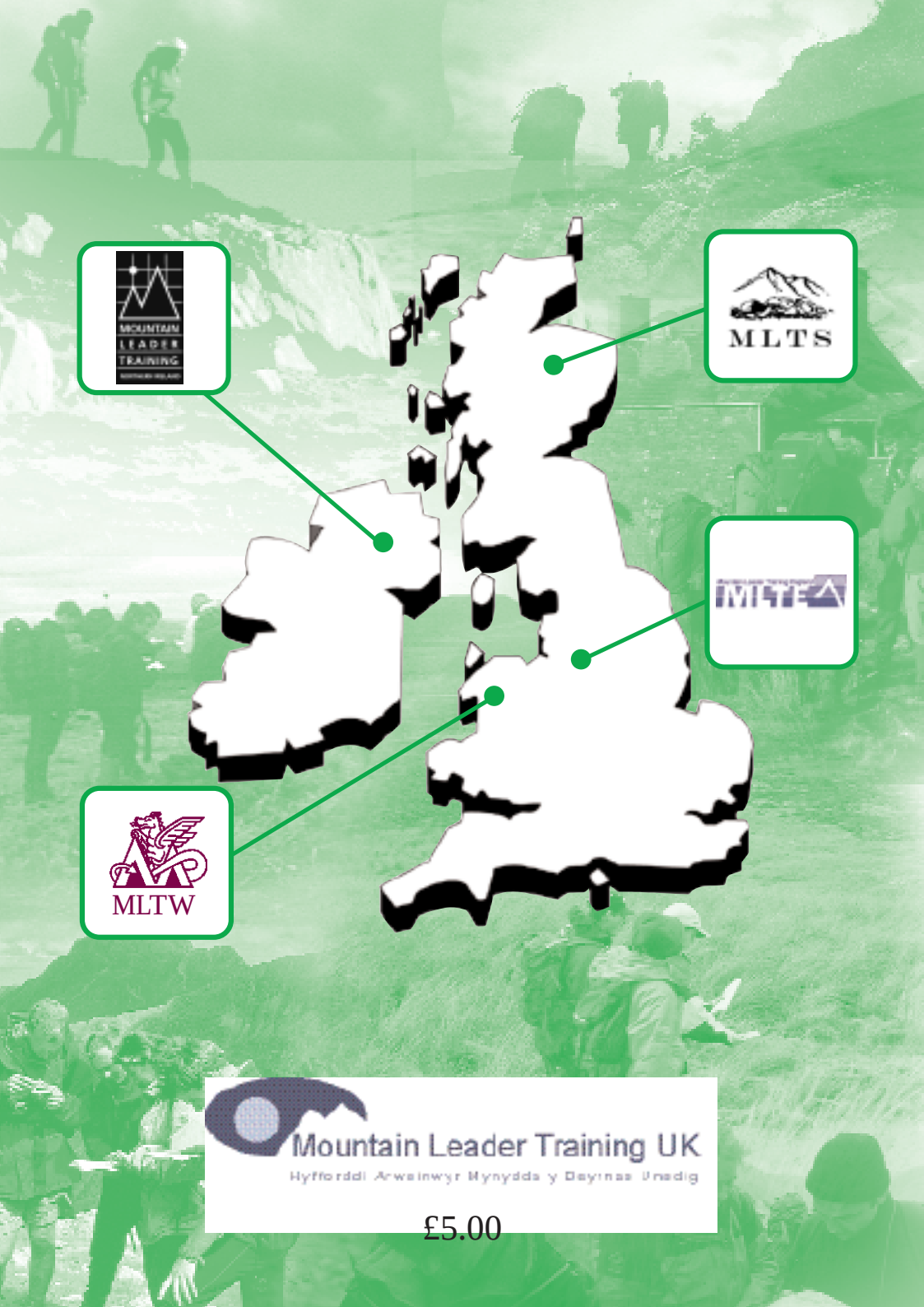
MLTS, Glenmore, Aviemore, Inverness-shire PH22 1QU
t: 01479 861248
f: 01479 861249
e: smltb@aol.com
w: www.mltuk.org

Mountain Leader Training Wales
Hyfforddi Arweinwyr Mynydd Cymru

MLTW, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy, LL24 0ET
t: 01690 720361
f: 01690 720248
e:info@mltw.org
w:www.mltw.org

Mountain Leader Training UK

Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ET
Tel: 01690 720272 Fax: 01690 720248 Email: info@mltuk.org Website: www.mltuk.org



Mountain Leader Training UK

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