



# **Mountain Leader Award**

**Guidelines for Candidates,  
Trainers and Assessors**

INSERT PLEASE NOTE: Contact the training office for further assistance. 016251112

# Mountain Leader Overview

## Transitional arrangements & timeline.

As you will probably be aware the two training boards in Ireland have been replaced by a single All Ireland Training Board, Mountain Training Board Ireland, MTBI. This new board took up position on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. Mountain Training boards of the UK & Ireland administer several shared awards, such as the Mountain Leader, Hill & Moorland Leader, Lowland Leader, Climbing Wall Instructor, Climbing Wall Development Instructor and Rock Climbing Instructor. The awards share the same syllabi and outcomes, but the pathway or prospectus differs in the case of the Mountain Leader Award. The new training board has made transitional arrangements on the way to implementing an agreed single pathway.

This document outlines the current differences in the ML pathway for the UK & Ireland and describes the time line for transition in Ireland towards a single preferred pathway, whilst still acknowledging the alternate pathway in the rest of the UK.

Currently there are two pathways to Mountain Leader, which are:

### 1. In Ireland

1. Completion of the 2 day Mountain Skills Assessment.

2. Register for the Mountain Leader Award.
3. Complete the 60 hour Mountain Leader Training Course, this can take place over a five day course or a split two day Mountain Leader 1 and three day Mountain Leader 2.
4. Consolidation period, where the assessment requirements are gathered.
5. Attend a 3 day Mountain Leader Assessment.

## **2. In the UK (including Northern Ireland)**

1. Register for the Mountain Leader Award.
2. Complete the 60 hour Mountain Leader Training Course, this can take place over a six day course or 3 two day Mountain Leader courses.
6. Consolidation period, where the assessment requirements are gathered.
7. Attend a 5 day Mountain Leader Assessment.

**\*The all-Ireland agreed prospectus for the Mountain Leader Award post transition period is as follows:**

1. Completion of the 2 day Mountain Skills Assessment.
2. Register for the Mountain Leader Award.
3. Complete the 60 hour Mountain Leader Training Course, this can take place over a five or 6 day course or a split version of the same.
4. Consolidation period, where the assessment requirements are gathered.
5. Attend a 4 day Mountain Leader Assessment.

## **Transitional arrangements & time line**

### **Registrations:**

-Registrants from 01/03/19 will follow the all-Ireland agreed new prospectus shown above\*.

-Registrants pre 01/03/19 continue the pathway they started until; the last 6 day training (31/12/19), and the last 3 or 5 day assessment (01/03/22).

### Training:

- Last 6 day ML training course, 31/12/19.
- Candidates trained up till 31/12/19 can continue to sit the appropriate 3 or 5 day Mountain Leader Assessment until 01/03/21.
- All candidates trained after 31/12/19, will follow the all-Ireland agreed new prospectus shown above\*.

### Mountain Leader Assessment.

- Last 3 day or 5 day Mountain Leader Assessment 01/03/22.
- Launch 4 day Mountain Leader Assessments 01/03/19. (Unlikely any courses until at least 03/2020.)
- Move to all 4 day Mountain Leader Assessment from 02 March 2022.

### In summary

#### Launch of single pathway\*

Date: 01/03/19  
Registrations: 01/03/19  
01/03/2019  
Training: 01/03/19  
Assessments: 01/03/19

#### Withdrawal of dual pathways

Last Registrations:  
  
Last Training: 31/12/2019  
Last Assessment: 01/03/2022



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## **1.0 General Outline of the Mountain Leader Award Scheme**

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### **1.1 Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI)**

MTBI (Mountain Training Board Ireland) is the body designated by Mountaineering Ireland (MI) in association with educational and youth groups to supervise mountaineering training on the island of Ireland. The Board does not arrange courses, but recognises course providers based on its standards and makes the appropriate awards to those who have completed the requirements and passed the assessments.

MTBI's main role is to operate a range of training schemes, covering varying levels of expertise in both hillwalking and rock climbing. This leaflet describes one of these schemes, namely the Mountain Leader scheme.

### **1.2 Scope of the Mountain Leader Scheme**

The Mountain Leader Scheme provides training for any hill walker who takes responsibility for others in the hills. It is designed to help hill walkers to lead groups safely in the conditions normally encountered in the UK & Ireland mountains and is most appropriate to those who are:

- I. teachers or youth leaders taking groups into the hills, whether or not mountaineering is their primary aim;
- II. leading groups on basic courses in a Centre, Camp or Mountain Tour Organisation;
- III. training inexperienced people in a Mountaineering Club.

It does not provide training in rock climbing or in winter mountaineering except as is necessary to give a leader confidence in dealing with rocky terrain or coping with an emergency situation.

### **1.3 Entry and Participation \*PLEASE SEE INSERT NOTE At the front of this handbook.**

Candidates who hold a

1. Current First Aid Certificate
2. Are members of a Mountaineering Council; MI, the BMC or MS.
3. Have passed the Mountain Skills Assessment

may register with MTBI. They are then given access to the digital Logbook and may commence training for the scheme.

The Mountain Skills Assessment is carried out over 2 days and consists of a written and practical test based on the Board's Mountain Skills syllabus. Prior attendance at an approved Mountain Skills Training Course is strongly recommended. Details of these requirements are given in the Mountain Skills leaflet.



## **1.4 Requirements to gain the Mountain Leader Award**

A candidate who wishes to obtain the award will comply with the following:-

### **1.4.1 Registration and Training**

1. Meet the Boards pre-entry requirements.
2. Be currently registered with a MT Board.
3. Satisfactorily complete a recognised Mountain Leadership Course.
4. Maintain in the prescribed logbook a record of activities in the mountains over a period of at least one year, which should include courses attended.
5. Possess an appropriate First Aid Certificate. (such as Rescue and Emergency Care Standard Award (level 3), Advanced Wilderness First Aid, or courses delivered by HSA providers that are appropriate to the ML environment)
6. Be at least 18 years of age.

### **1.4.2 Personal and Leadership Experience**

7. Gain broad personal hillwalking experience in a variety of the UK & Irelands mountain areas which must include at least 20 quality days. This experience should be gained post registration.
8. Organise a weekend hillwalking trip for a group (in consultation with an ML holder acceptable to the candidate's ML Training Provider).
9. Gain experience progressively of leading parties over varied routes in the UK & Ireland, which must include at least 6 days leadership experience. This is in addition to the personal experience and the group weekend outlined above.
10. Spend a further 6 days assisting one or more Mountain Leader(s), or higher award holder, of which at least 2 days to be on an MTBI - recognised course.
11. Camp in two different non-roadside locations in the hills in winter. (Note: If appropriate, the camping days may also be counted towards fulfilling any of the other requirements, outlined above).
12. Be an active member of a recognised mountaineering club in the UK or Ireland or an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland, the British Mountaineering Council or Mountaineering Scotland.

### **1.4.3 Assessed Skills and Knowledge**

14. Demonstrate an ability to navigate accurately and safely over the UK & Irelands mountains in any type of weather and at night.
15. Demonstrate an ability to safeguard others on steep ground.
16. Demonstrate a knowledge of incident and accident procedures required of a group leader.
17. Demonstrate an ability to use weather knowledge and forecasts.
18. Demonstrate a knowledge of river crossing methods.
19. Have an elementary knowledge of background subjects (such as mountaineering abroad, the mountain flora etc.).
20. Demonstrate a knowledge of the role and responsibility of the mountain leader with regard to access and conservation issues in the mountains.
21. Demonstrate an ability to camp efficiently and with minimum impact in the mountains.

### **1.5 Exemptions**

People with very substantial hillwalking experience prior to commencing training may apply to the Board for a reduction in the log book requirements of Personal & Leadership Experience. Suitable experience pre-registration must amount to at least 20 quality hill days, 6 days with an ML holder and 6 days leading groups, all within the previous 5 years. In this case requirements 7, 8 & 11 will be halved. In exceptional circumstances, MTBI may allow people with extensive hillwalking and leadership experience to exempt all or part of the formal training course. Apply in writing well in advance to the Secretary of MTBI.

### **1.6 Guide to Personal Experience**

The purpose of requirement 7 is for trainees to broaden their hillwalking experience in a variety of terrain. It is recommended that at least part of this experience is gained through mountaineering / hillwalking club activities. A variety of terrain usually implies that a variety of different navigational techniques will be practiced. A broad definition of a quality day would include some or most of the following:-

- the day was planned, instigated and performed under trainee's own initiative
- time – at least 5 hours
- distance – over 16 km with over 600m of uphill

- variety of terrain
- unfamiliar area
- route of ascent / descent different
- weather has effect on days outcome
- something learnt
- feeling of satisfaction
- a variety of hillwalking techniques

The Mountains of Mourne, Donegal, Cork & Kerry, Galway & Mayo, Dublin & Wicklow, Snowdonia, Lake District, Brecon Beacons, Scottish Highlands, Galloway Hills are examples of key mountain areas.

## **1.7 Guide to Leadership Experience**

Trainees meeting requirement 9, should show that they have acquired experience navigating whilst also leading parties i.e. probably most experienced in group. Some candidates will find it useful to assist at a local outdoor centre in order to broaden their experience in the area of dealing with young people and / or complete novices. The requirements relating to Personal & Leadership Experience can normally be completed in twelve to eighteen months but may take more or less.

## **1.8 Training**

Mountain Leader training falls naturally into four parts:

1. Formal training in Mountain Leadership and First Aid
2. Acquisition of personal skills and experience
3. Acquisition of leadership and instructional skills
4. Acquisition of background knowledge

### **1.8.1 Training Courses**

The formal instruction and assessment are undertaken by recognised course directors. Check [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) or [www.mountain-training.org](http://www.mountain-training.org). It is the candidate's own responsibility to book courses with these providers. Candidates must attend a Mountain Leadership training course(s) totalling five days. The course provides an introduction to the training and functions of a mountain leader. A First Aid Course orientated towards mountaineering is also required - see page 7 for details.

## **1.9 Mountain Activities and Reading**

It must be stressed that the experience gained by the candidate is at least as important as the formal instruction received when it comes to assessment. Accordingly it is necessary to allocate time to achieving a reasonable standard of personal performance and fitness and to fulfilling the requirements of the Scheme. Candidates, with the help of their trainers should assess their progress regularly and decide what further training and experience is needed. They should also read widely on mountaineering related subjects. The prescribed text is 'Hillwalking - the official handbook of the Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader Schemes', 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition published for MTUK, by Vertebrate Graphics 2014. This book can be purchased from the MI and MTUK online shop.

### **1.10 Log Book**

Candidates are required to maintain and submit their digital log book in order to show:

1. Their mountaineering experience and activity
2. Compliance with the requirements of the scheme
3. Attendance at the required courses etc.

The logbook is a most important link between the candidate, MTBI and the training body. It must be kept up-to-date and submitted when booking places on courses. The Training / Assessment Course Director will monitor the log books on MTBI's behalf.

### **1.11 Pre-Assessment**

Before final assessment candidates must show from their log books that they have completed all the requirements of the Scheme. Candidates are advised to check with their trainer regarding their readiness for assessment. The notes for candidates, trainers and assessors that follow in Part 3 of this document should be studied carefully.

### **1.12 First Aid**

All Mountain Leader assessment candidates are required to hold a valid First Aid certificate (such as Rescue and Emergency Care Standard Award (level 3), Advanced Wilderness First Aid, or courses delivered by HSA providers that are appropriate to the ML environment). All ML holders are strongly urged to keep their first

aid skills up-to-date, whether by reading, attending courses etc.

### **1.13 Assessment**

Candidates must attend a three day assessment, generally in a mountain area unknown to them, during which they will be tested in practical aspects of the syllabus by assessors approved by MTBI. Failure to reach the required standard at assessment will result in the candidate having to repeat part or all of an assessment in a specified time. Candidates who repeat part of the assessment on two occasions and who fail to meet the required standard will be asked to repeat the full assessment. Mountain Leader Assessments are arranged through MTBI, for details of upcoming assessments contact the MI office or check [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

### **1.14 Post Assessment**

On satisfactory completion of all the requirements, candidates are granted a Mountain Leadership Award. MTBI however emphasizes that the candidates own realisation of their strengths and weaknesses is important and stresses the need for leaders to continue to update their skills and knowledge. Employers must ultimately decide whether a leader has the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for a particular group of people.

### **1.15 UK Candidates \*PLEASE SEE INSERT NOTE at the front of this handbook.**

Those who have completed ML training in the UK must successfully complete the Mountain Skills Assessment. Candidates should then contact MTBI and will be deemed eligible for exemption from MTBI ML training on proof of completion of Mountain Leader Training in the UK. They can then complete the 3-day Mountain Leader Assessment. Details of the Mountain Skills Assessment are available on the Mountaineering Ireland website. Candidates must complete all the requirements for the MTBI ML Award.

**Alternatively**, candidates already trained in the UK can attend a 5 day Mountain Leader assessment offered by Tollymore National Outdoor Training Centre or another MI/MTBI provider. This would remove the Mountain Skills Assessment requirement.

### **1.16 Useful Addresses**

**Mountaineering Ireland**, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blachardstown, Dublin 15

Phone (+353 1) 625 1115

email: [training@mountaineering.ie](mailto:training@mountaineering.ie)

[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

## **2.0 Syllabus**

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### **2.1 Party Leadership and the Responsibilities of the Party Leader**

Candidates must be conversant with the main areas of responsibilities of the mountain party leader, particularly for the care and safety of the party as follows:

#### **2.1.1 General Responsibilities of the Party Leader**

- To parents/guardians where appropriate, to individual party members, and to the party as a whole.
- To the sponsoring Authority or Committee and to the Head Teacher or Warden or Club organiser sanctioning the expedition.
- To the general public, to the environment, to local residents or farmers and to the mountaineering fraternity.

#### **2.1.2 Specific Responsibilities of the Party Leader**

- To identify the underlying aims and objectives and to define the specific purpose of the expedition.
- To carry out initial planning e.g., to obtain parental consent, authority clearance, personal and medical information, costing, insurance arrangements.
- To complete detailed preparations, e.g. plan routes, obtain access permission, weather forecasts and brief the group.
- To ensure the group is properly equipped.

#### **2.1.3 Operational Responsibilities of the Party Leader in the mountains**

- To provide a safe and rewarding experience for each party member
  - through involvement, interest, enjoyment and achievement
  - through imparting appropriate technical skills and competence
  - through fostering environmental awareness.

- To meet the changing needs of the group and its individual members
  - by observation, anticipation and good judgement
  - by sensitivity to the state of the party and of its members, with particular regard to its health and fitness
  - by maintaining confidence and enthusiasm despite uncertainty or stress
  - by adopting leadership styles appropriate to the situation.
- To manage the group effectively by setting and reviewing targets
  - by positive decision-making
  - by delegation where appropriate
  - by proper group control and discipline
  - by good communication.
- To make suitable route choices, interpret and evaluate terrain, revising routes where necessary.

## **2.2 Navigation**

- Revision and development of basic skills in Mountain Skills syllabus.
- Development of contour interpretation skills.
- Choice and application of techniques: attack points, collecting features, aiming off, sweep approaches etc.
- Exact use of timing/pacing and compass work.
- Relocation skills: slope aspect, spiral and box searches.
- Route planning with reference to: aims, terrain, weather, party ability, escape routes and hazards

## **2.3 Walking Skills**

- Individual skills – fitness, rhythm, foot placing, conservation of energy, balance and co-ordination.
- Party skills – leader and tailman, psychology of the group, corporate strength, group management.
- Party procedure on different terrain e.g. scree, narrow ridge, steep broken slope.

## **2.4 Personal Equipment**

Personal equipment required for mountain expeditions (both high and low level) taking into account weather conditions such as wind, temperature and humidity and giving consideration to design characteristics such as: (i) material (ii) reaction to conditions (iii) weight and bulk when dry and wet (iv) care and maintenance.

## **2.5 Campcraft**

### **2.5.1 Equipment**

- Different types and makes of:
  - tents, sleeping bags, stoves, rucksacks and other light-weight equipment.
- Selection of equipment required for various types of expedition.
- Packing and carrying personal and communal equipment.

### **2.5.2 Food**

- Selection of suitable foods, quantities and packaging.
- Preparation and cooking of foods.

### **2.5.3 Other Skills**

- Selection of campsite, including environmental considerations.
- Siting and pitching of tent.
- Organisation of camp and individuals tents.
- Group and personal hygiene.
- Use of huts, bothies and other shelters.
- Bivouacs: planned and emergency.



## **2.6 Security on Steep Ground**

Steep mixed terrain is often encountered in the hills. Leaders should endeavour by means of suitable route choice and appropriate party management to avoid situations where the use of a rope is required to protect group members. However situations do arise, mostly in descent where the rope may be necessary to safeguard members of the party.

The purpose of this section is to familiarise candidates with elementary techniques and to enable them to recognise difficulties and potential dangers and to give competent help in case of emergency. Any safe method used and taught should involve the use of rope alone. This section of the syllabus is not intended to train candidates as rock climbers, nor is it intended for those people who set out with the intention of using the rope.

### **2.6.1 Choice of line and supervision of party**

- Route selection
- Movement on mixed terrain.
- Assessing risk
- Objective hazard (stone fall, wet grass etc.).
- Different visual limitations and hazards in ascent and descent.
- Negotiating steep ground without the use of a rope (in descent, traversing and ascent)
- Position of the leader and procedure.
- Position of group members (safe havens etc.)
- Consideration of the likelihood and/or consequences of a slip.
- Means and limitations of offering assistance.

Negotiating steep ground with the use of a rope

- Suitability of different types and sizes of rope, rope management and appropriate knots.
- Selection of suitable anchor points.
- Methods of belaying.

- Lowering.
- Abseiling, without a safety rope, on moderate terrain. Abseiling is for the leader only and not for group members.
- Confidence roping
  - safeguarding one party member on non-serious terrain with both the leader and the party member moving.

## **2.7 Emergency Procedures**

An understanding of the following medical conditions, their causes, signs, symptoms, prevention and treatment.

- Mountain Hypothermia ('Exposure') and its treatment both in the field and at the base.
- Cold injuries
- Heat disorders
- Common medical problems, e.g., asthma, diabetes, blisters, sprains
- Procedure in the event of an accident and methods of contacting the emergency services.
- Methods of search and evacuation
- Improvised mountain rescue equipment
  - application and limitations
  - emergency bivouac skills.

## **2.8 Mountain Hazards**

### **2.8.1 Awareness of the Major Environmental Hazards**

- Mountain Hazards and how to deal with them, including loose rocks, flooding, lightning, marshy ground, snow.

### **2.8.2 River Crossing (un-rope)**

- Use of weather forecast and maps to predict potentially dangerous crossings
- Dangers and methods of avoidance.
- Finding the best crossing points.

- Weighing up the consequences versus the likelihood of group members being swept away.
- Choosing appropriate tactics.
- Group briefing, preparation and safety precautions.
- Crossing without a rope – e.g., ‘The Huddle’, ‘Line Astern’, ‘Line Abreast’.

## **2.9 Weather**

Candidates must have an elementary knowledge of weather. They must gain experience in relating regional weather forecasts to mountainous areas and develop their ability to make short-term forecasts from observed meteorological conditions. Candidates should be conversant with the following:

- Sources of information on weather.
- Elementary interpretation of weather maps.
- Weather development associated with major cloud forms, change in wind direction and in pressure.
- Effect of mountains on the weather.
- Impact of weather on conditions underfoot.
- Application of weather knowledge in planning suitable routes.

## **2.10 Access and Conservation**

Candidates should:

- Be aware of the multiple uses of upland areas (e.g. hill farming, forestry, water collection, horse riding, grouse shooting, stalking) all of which must be respected by the recreational user.
- Appreciate the problems of conservation (e.g. wildlife, plant life and erosion) and be aware of the long term effects of human pressure on the upland environment.
- Know how and where to get information about access to wild country (e.g. from National Park Authorities, Coillte, local land owners, MI and other agencies).
- Appreciate the significance of lack of rights of way in upland areas, having regard to the fact that a large proportion of these areas are in private ownership.
- Understand the nature of specially designated areas and limitation on their

use (e.g. National Parks, Nature Reserves and Special Areas of Conservation).

- Be familiar with the MI's Good Practice Guide for Walkers and the Leave No Trace programme.

## **2.11 Background Knowledge**

- Mountain Leader candidates should be able to display their knowledge about all aspects of mountaineering and the mountain environment e.g. geology, flora and fauna, local history, history of mountaineering, photography.
- Details of clubs and organisation.
- The origins, development and ethics of mountaineering within Ireland and the UK.

The leader should know about, or have access to information on suitable training organisations, mountaineering clubs, guidebooks and mountain literature.

## **2.12 Leading Young People**

Mountain Leader candidates should understand the additional responsibilities attached to leading people under the age of 18. All candidates should be aware of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, a joint publication produced by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland and should be familiar with the MI Good Practice and Child Protection Policy. Candidates should note that these documents are not simply about how to deal with suspected abuse, but about ensuring that activities are child-centred, delivering a positive experience of sport for young people.

## 2.13 Bibliography:

**Hillwalking** – the official handbook of the Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader Schemes, published by MTUK. (Recommended text – 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published 2014). (Available from the MI & MTUK online shops.)

**Navigation in the Mountains** – the definitive guide for Hillwalkers, Mountaineers & Leaders. The official navigation book for all Mountain Training Schemes. (Published by MTUK. – published 2012). (Available from the MI & MTUK online shops.)

**Outdoor Navigation Handbook for Tutors** – Pat & Brian Mee (Published by Harvey, 2014). (Available from MI online shop)

**Mountain Navigation** by Peter Cliff.

**Outdoor Leadership** by John Graham.

**Mountain Skills Handbook** by Pete Hill & Stuart Johnston.

**Mountain Weather** by Dave Pedgely.

**Safety on Mountains** (BMC) (Available from MI & BMC online shops)

**Tread Lightly** (BMC)

**Where to Go in the Great Outdoors Sanitation Leaflet** (Mountaineering Scotland).

**Water Hazards in the Mountains** (Video) Scottish Mountain Safety Forum (Available from MI online shop or office)

**Mountain Rescue Handbook** – Irish Mountain Rescue Association.

**Irish Mountain Log** and other hillwalking/climbing magazines.

## 3.0 Syllabus Notes

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### 3.1 Group Management and Leadership

#### 3.1.1 Candidates

Having read the booklets and chapters recommended in the bibliography, you will be aware that there are various styles of leadership, each of which may well suit a particular situation. During the assessment, you will be expected to demonstrate the ability to lead safely and effectively. Whatever your chosen style, it should enable the group to be informed, involved and, where appropriate, protected. It is important that you know something about the theory of leadership. Leadership is not solely being out in front or giving briefings. There are many finer points to this poorly defined subject. You should find out what style of leadership you normally adopt and also examine why you want to lead others in mountain terrain and what you feel can be achieved by each person in your care. You will also need to understand something of the following aspects:

- Responsibilities of the leader,
- Functions of the leader,
- Styles of leadership, skills of leadership,
- The legal and moral implications of leadership.

You should have a fair amount of actual leadership experience in different circumstances as per requirement no 9. This may mean formally, leading a familiar walk or informally, being the most experienced member of a group of friends in more testing conditions.

You should understand some of the psychological problems of stress in emergency situations and preferably have first-hand experience of dealing with common emergencies. This type of experience is hard won. Assessment staff will expect you to respond to given leadership situations in an appropriate manner, while being aware themselves that there will always be more than one solution.

### 3.1.2 Trainers

Probably the best way to train candidates in leadership is to use situations that can be experienced and reflected upon. These situations do not have to be specifically set up; with available time quite short, it will be necessary to use situations as they occur. It should be easy to add leadership dimensions to most of the practical sessions and some will provide excellent opportunities for each candidate to practice leadership roles. Steep ground may provide some of the best opportunities for candidates to behave as leaders. Candidates confidence and ability can vary enormously on this sort of terrain, reflecting the variations more normally found in walking groups.

**Topics for discussion:** It may be useful to run tutorial sessions and the following are suggested as possible topics:

- Distinguish between qualities and roles of leadership.
- Identify some styles (coercive, permissive, cooperative) and outline the characteristics of each.
- Draw upon your own experience and illustrate, with some leadership 'models', the various consequences of using them.
- Analyse hypothetical accidents involving leadership errors.
- Review the relationships between the 'task needs' and 'group needs' in sample situations.

Trainers should provide opportunities to analyse situations, as they occur during practical sessions and run informal reviews at the end of exercises which involve an element of leadership. In this respect candidates should be given individual briefings and should leave the training course with a fair idea of what is required of them when operating as party leaders. Accident and emergency exercises may well be used in this context but trainers must take care not to neglect the more commonplace leadership tasks. Trainers too, should be well versed in the literature specified for candidates and preferably a good deal more

### 3.1.3 Assessors

It is extremely difficult to provide genuine leadership situations on assessment. Groups of three assessment peers are not likely to react like normal parties; candidates under assessment are not likely to respond like normal party leaders! Assessors should be clear in their own minds as to which aspects of leadership they can properly assess within the structure of the course. Certain 'skills' such as: pace setting, briefings & communication, rests, party supervision, routine decision- making are relatively easy to evaluate, as too are aspects such as: choice and preparation of personal equipment, selecting routes over varying terrain, reaction to posed emergency situations.

However, judgements about the best course of action for changing or demanding situations have to be weighed carefully against the various alternatives. In some cases and especially if doubts exist, it is wiser to use these situations for further training, whereby different 'solutions' can be identified and examined. Assessors must

therefore carefully consider how they use contrived or artificial situations of assessment and must make it plain to the candidate exactly 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. The necessity for an honest bond between assessor and candidates will be very important.

Assessors should give daily debriefs, with special regard to leadership aspects. Such sessions will provide a vital platform for discussion and an opportunity to compare what the leader thought was happening, with other perceptions of the same situation.

## **3.2 Navigation**

### **3.2.1 Candidates**

Much emphasis is placed on this aspect of the syllabus. It is a fundamental skill of the mountain leader, allowing the flexibility to cope with changing weather, revised aims of the group, emergencies etc.

You must be able to navigate well in all conditions – day or night, good visibility or bad – and will at times have to cope with additional tasks such as managing the group. While preparing for assessment, you should concentrate on navigating across unfamiliar ground, on and off footpaths.

Additionally, orienteering is a very accessible form of micro-navigation training, albeit on a scale of map not normally associated with the mountains.

The mountain leader should be able to navigate competently on standard hillwalking routes in the conditions normally encountered on the Irish hills. This would include mist and darkness but not involve winter mountaineering.

As a guide, the following skills have been listed as essential navigation skills for the ML. A candidate should be able to:-

- Work with different map scales,
- Interpret conventional signs and accurately use the grid system.
- Extract detailed information, especially from contours and be able to relate it to the observed topography.
- Measure distance on the map and have accurate systems for its estimation on the ground.
- Set the map and navigate in reasonable visibility without the compass.
- Select an appropriate compass, obtain grid and magnetic bearings and set the map with the compass.
- Navigate accurately with map and compass in mountainous terrain, especially in poor visibility or in darkness.
- Demonstrate a number of self-location techniques.
- Choose appropriate routes, prepare route cards and include bad weather alternatives, escape routes and the



location of known assistance.

Below are some examples of the types of navigation test you might be asked to perform. The examples are based on the route taken during an assessment in the Bluestack Mountains, Co Donegal.

To plot the examples you will need Sheet 11 of the 1:50 000 series. Also consult the sample programme at the rear of the booklet.

**Day 1** Walk on to Corabber Waterfall (G 978879)

Start:

- To Hill top (986880)
- To Top of valley (993880)
- To Top of spur (007878)
- To Change in slope on spur (H 014894)
- To Col (000 892)
- To Spur (996900)
- To Lake (984901)
- To Campsite beside Lough Belshade at (976900)

All the above legs done in reasonable visibility to test map reading skills, route selection & group management.  
Total c. 10km. Distance / 750m ascent.

**Night Navigation**

Start: Stream outlet at (980894)

- To Hill top (980894)
- To Top of spur (977884)
- To Lake north end (976890)
- To Hill top (984891)
- To Campsite

All legs in conditions of limited visibility to test compass skills, navigation tactics and group management skills.  
Total c. 5Km distance / 100m ascent.

## Day 2

Steep ground work on broken slopes above L. Belshade at (981906)

Navigation to Hill top (974910)

To Top of valley (965906)

To Spot Height. 594m. (962894)

To Hill top (950893)

To Top of spur (942884)

To Campsite at (924893): Total c. 9Km. Distance / 500m. ascent.

## Day 3

Various similar exercises on return to finish checking aspects not covered sufficiently.

Start Campsite (924893)

To Lake (925879)

To Flat part of valley (937884)

To Hill top (958888)

To Spur (967880)

To Edergole Bridge

Common weakness at assessment are:

- Unnecessary use of the compass
- Too often walking on bearings in reasonable visibility when a more comfortable route could be found.
- Inability to extract sufficient information from the map, particularly relating to contours.
- Lack of observation of the ground and its relationship to what is shown on the map.
- Lack of a reliable system for estimating distance while walking.
- Inability to change from one map scale to another (1:50000, 1:25000)
- Inappropriate route choice.

### 3.2.2 Trainers

Whilst candidates will be expected to possess the basic skills of the Mountain Skills syllabus, trainers should provide a revision session as necessary. Trainers should teach aspects of navigation in relation to group leadership, including route selection and party supervision, remembering that assessors will expect candidates to be able to cope with both navigation and leadership problems simultaneously.

Part of the training should encourage candidates to make route choices by looking at the ground ahead as well as by constant reference to the map. Training opportunities for this aspect of navigation will be difficult to fulfil once the contact with experienced trainers is lost.

Navigation training should be presented in a structured form, so that progress is made throughout the course. By the end candidates should understand the importance of a high level of competence, be aware of the standard at assessment and of how much work they (individually) need to undertake before hand

**Advice on Training Topics:** The appropriate choice and application of techniques is a vital skill. By lecture, discussion and practical exercises, illustrate the use of appropriate techniques / tactics to navigate in differing situations. Help candidates to understand the limitations of certain tactics and to judge when change is required. Training should cover the following situations:

- Good weather and clear visibility.
- Bad weather and poor visibility.
- Use of collecting features and aiming off.
- Use of attack points and sweep approaches.
- Boxing an obstacle when following compass bearing.
- Calculating times for various walking speeds.
- Advice on accurate pacing
- Very poor visibility.
- Well defined ridge / spur terrain
- Plateau or rolling hills terrain.

**Map reading skills:** Trainees should be shown how to navigate efficiently in clear weather by map features on both 1:50 000 and other map scales. In poor weather, trainees should be taught how to relate contour detail (and other features) to the ground.

**Micro Navigation:** Fine navigation – use of map, pacing/timing and compass together on short legs. Trainees should be encouraged to calculate times/ distances/ bearings as accurately as possible. When navigating they should be encouraged to measure times and follow bearings accurately as well as relating the map closely to the ground.

**Relocation skills:** Training should include getting trainee to reason out position from previous events. Also use of slope aspect, spiral/box searches and the ability to measure directions of line features and plot resulting bearings on map.

**Training Methods:** The first session of night navigation should be conducted as follows: Explain the reasons for night navigation training in ML. Tasks should be easy with a good probability of success.

However, the exercise should demonstrate some of the navigational and leadership problems that arise in poor visibility along with solutions. Emphasis should be on learning and applying appropriate techniques – map reading, pacing, timing at slower speeds, compass work to include use of collecting features, aiming off and attack points. Training should be progressive – introduce skills initially in very easy legs and build up.

Errors in time calculations and measurement of bearings should be investigated as they arise. Similarly, errors in following bearings and measuring time/paces should be rectified on the spot.

A good approach is for the entire group to be shown navigation task, for a chosen trainee to choose tactics, followed by a group discussion and lastly, any calculations required. At the end of each leg, the success of the tactics should be appraised and any problems, whether personal to 'leader' or inherent in tactics, highlighted.

**Advanced or bad weather navigation:** The importance of practice in a variety of terrain and a variety of weather conditions must be emphasised in training. Some training time must be spent in more trying conditions so as to illustrate the possibilities and limitations of different navigation tactics along with associated problems of group management.

Whilst the overall objective must be to present a learning experience, it may prove useful if trainees are 'stretched' a bit by the selection of harder tasks. Some indication of the style and standard of navigation required at assessment will be useful for trainees.

It is of importance that such an approach is limited to a short period and is presented as a learning experience, as preparation for assessment. Instructors should be ready to revert to a more helpful approach if individuals require it. Trainers should endeavour to provide specialist courses in navigation for trainees that require additional tuition.

### 3.2.3 Assessors

Navigation will be tested throughout the course so assessors can afford to settle the candidates into the course by setting relatively straightforward tasks early on.

Assessors need to be sure that errors, particularly at the start of the course, were due to inability, rather than misunderstanding 'exam tension', or indeed any factor other than lack of ability. Decisions regarding failure should not be made too early in the assessment.

Assessors should remember that although navigation seems to be an exact science, many factors have to be taken into account when moving in unknown terrain. All great navigators in this world will have become 'lost' at some stage or other. It is imperative that a particular stage is not terminated just because a candidate may appear to be 'lost'.

Assessors must be sure that sufficient time and opportunities are provided for a candidate to correct any mistakes. The main requirements are to ascertain whether or not a candidate can respond well to normal tasks of way finding and can cope well as a leader, even when mistakes are made. In terms of the terrain used, a balance must be struck between fine navigation, often assessed on moorland and the broader style of navigation used when following ridges, paths or other major features.

Micro navigation on a moor can allow a large number of comparable legs to be set in a relatively short space of time. However, a straightforward mountain walk can also provide many opportunities to assess navigation while also reminding everyone of the essence of the activity. Visibility will obviously influence the style of navigation used by the candidates. Where the weather is good, greater emphasis will be placed on night navigation, although this is no guarantee of poor visibility. In such circumstances, complex convex slopes will at least limit the amount of ground visible at anytime.

**Overall Navigation Standard:** The candidate should be able to navigate competently on standard hillwalking routes in the conditions normally encountered on the Irish hills. This would include mist and darkness but not involve winter mountaineering.

**Maps:** 1 :50,000 scale should be used for the bulk of the navigation assessment. Candidates should demonstrate an ability to navigate using other map scales. There are arguments for/against the assessor being familiar with the assessment terrain. If familiar s/he can choose fair objectives and be in a good position to track errors. However, being familiar can lead to complacency in assessor and unrealistic expectations of candidates.

**Group Organisation during assessment:** Only one candidate should be leading the group at any stage. Candidates should be advised to positively state that they have reached their destination. Generally the assessor should avoid confirming positions except to put at ease an obviously nervous candidate, at the start of an assessment.

Candidates can either be asked to navigate several legs in succession or candidates can be given legs in rotation. Former is more realistic. Sometimes, it is useful to only show the leader where the destination is.

This reduces the possibility of them getting help from others and allows assessors to get insights into other candidates capabilities.

With this approach other candidates often concentrate more, are less complacent and make fewer mistakes. Avoid allocating 'minitalks' or scenarios to candidates when they are actually leading. Only allocate to those following in conditions where concentration is not required, i.e., not in poor visibility.

**Objective/Subjective Criteria:** It is problematic to put figures on required accuracies. A better approach is to think of objective criteria in terms of the difficulty of tasks set – task selection. Subjective criteria are best listed as how the candidate actually goes about solving tasks. Listed below are guidelines on both aspects. The acceptable standard for ML is defined by the difficulty of the tasks that the assessor sets and the efficiency with which the candidate solves them rather than degrees of accuracy in following bearings etc.

**Task Selection:** The assessor can think in terms of setting a series of (navigational) tasks for each candidate. Tasks should be chosen in mind of the criteria listed above, the prevailing conditions and any potential weaknesses that need to be explored. Each task should have a purpose. Start/finish points should be selected according to the conditions and the map. By and large they should be definite features on the map and likely to be so on the ground. In conditions of poor visibility, normal hillwalking routes are appropriate, e.g., using spurs, cols, ridges, summits, forests, boundaries and lakes. Choose definite point features or major changes in slope/ direction on line features. In conditions of good visibility, smaller features which should be out of sight at the start of a leg can be used. When selecting small contour features, using 10m contour interval on 1:50,000 maps, it is advisable only to choose features where the slope is depicted by at least two 10m contour lines.

**Assessment Criteria:** The candidate must demonstrate proficiencies as listed below and under 'Navigation – Candidates'. The following points highlight aspects where a higher standard is required above MS level.

- Ability to adapt to different map scales. 1:50 000 to be considered norm. Candidate should not make dangerous navigational errors when using other scales.
- Ability to select appropriate and safe navigational tactics for any given task. It is important that the chosen tactics are likely to succeed and not likely to bring party onto dangerous ground. These to cover both clear and poor visibility conditions and techniques covered in training.
- Ability to execute the tactics chosen. If the tactics chosen are reasonable and they are executed with reasonable proficiency then it should not matter if the exact destination is not located.
- Ability to modify chosen route in the light of hazards or previous navigational errors;
- Ability to relate contour information to ground in conditions of poor visibility.
- Ability to use map, compass and pacing/timing together effectively.
- Ability to route find where the map is not a good representation of the terrain
- Ability to apply relocation techniques and common sense

In clear visibility, navigation should be quick and confident. In poor visibility, candidates may take time to make decisions, calculations etc., but not excessively so.

**Errors:** Navigation tasks carried out competently reinforce the assessors opinion of that candidate. When problems occur, an opportunity exists to explore the candidates strengths and weaknesses. These situations should be handled carefully in order to derive maximum information. Unless an error is complete/final/dangerous, never pass on control of group immediately to another candidate but rather tease out degree of error. Ideally, set another task which is dependent on initial error. The idea is to see if candidate realises first error and can correct. If in doubt, give easier task (major feature); if this is attained, then go back to harder task; if candidate fails on easier task, then assessor has useful 'conclusive' information.

Where it is not possible to set new task (time, situation etc.), at least tease out by discussion and questions just how candidate arrived at their conclusions – was it a complete error or just one weakness in a chain of events. Avoid in general confirming position to any of group of candidates. If all are confused, show the assessors estimate of position to next person to take over as it is otherwise unfair.

### **3.3 Access and Conservation**

#### **3.3.1 Candidates**

Great importance is now attached to environmental matters and candidates must take a positive interest in this aspect of the syllabus. Leaders of groups in the hills, especially of young people, must be able to ensure that the day's activities are conducted with sensitivity towards access and with minimum impact on the environment. They should also aim to engender an understanding, appreciation and long-term commitment to these issues in members of the group. When attending assessment, you may be questioned about your knowledge of a wide range of subjects, including: access legislation, rights of landowners, trespass, restrictions on access due to shooting and military training and other potentially conflicting land uses, National Parks and other land designations. You will need to be aware of your responsibility to the environment and to preserve its quality for future generations. You should also respect existing access arrangements. Footpath erosion, damage to walls and fences, unsightly and damaging litter, fires, pollution and upland campsite damage are all problems which are under a leader's control. You must also be aware of the less obvious damage which can be done to the flora and fauna of the countryside by various means from mere human presence to physical interference. Access and conservation matters vary from area to area and leaders should acquaint themselves with current issues in the areas in which they operate.

### **3.3.2 Trainers**

Trainers will need to make candidates aware of the problems which they are likely to face regarding access, their legal rights and the types of arrangements which exist with landowners.

Trainers should impress upon candidates the need to establish a responsible attitude towards the environment and encourage them to develop their knowledge of related matters. Access and conservation could form the basis of a short lecture early in the programme and practical situations should then be discussed as they arise during the course. It is emphasised that discussion with candidates will enhance awareness of likely problems and the topics which need more attention.

### **3.3.3 Assessors**

Although certain aspects of access and conservation are formally assessable, a clearer indication of the candidate's awareness of the issues involved will be gained by discussion during the course. Assessors should remember that access issues vary from area to area and they may wish to question each candidate about his or her local issues.

Assessors will gain much from listening to informed discussion between candidates in relation to the special problems which occur in their particular areas. As with all aspects of the syllabus, any candidate who shows serious weaknesses in his or her knowledge of and attitude to access and conservation may be deferred.

## **3.4 Walking Skills and Personal Equipment**

### **3.4.1 Candidates**

As committed mountain walkers, you will be expected to have experience in upland areas before embarking on a training course. It is also to your advantage to have experience of rough mountain terrain, since trainers will concentrate on the skills of leading and managing groups on such ground.

You are expected to be physically fit when attending courses and also to possess suitable clothing and equipment for mountain journeys. For the training course it may be possible to borrow or hire specialised equipment from the centre operating the course. Centres will usually supply equipment lists before courses commence and will always be prepared to help when special problems exist. However, you will be expected to supply your own equipment at assessment.

A confident and efficient performance will be expected at assessment. You should develop your walking skills so that you are at ease on unfamiliar terrain and can move effectively over difficult ground. You should be able to identify good and bad walking techniques and help correct others faults. At assessment, you should be able to demonstrate the suitability of your own clothing and equipment and the confidence that all the items will function correctly, especially in bad weather. You should have a sound understanding of the principles behind clothing and equipment design and be able to advise beginners on the suitability of items, particularly where a limited budget is involved. You will need to show that you possess a sufficient degree of physical fitness to act as a safe Mountain Leader.



### **3.4.2 Trainers**

Time must be set aside at the outset of the course to give candidates sound advice about clothing and equipment. Where a candidate's equipment is found to be lacking, constructive advice must be offered before embarking on mountain walks.

Candidates should be encouraged to travel light but with sufficient equipment to deal with emergency situations; group safety gear should be demonstrated and then shared equitably.

Trainers should introduce walking and movement skills as aspects of party safety, remembering that candidates will need, eventually, to teach these skills to others.

Trainers should display their own rucksack contents when appropriate and discuss their personal attitudes to individual and group equipment. Formal lectures on party safety, personal equipment and emergency situations will cover most of the theoretical requirements. Constructive advice regarding personal ability or equipment deficiencies, must be offered to individual candidates at the end of the training course.

### **3.4.3 Assessors**

Assessment of this area of the syllabus may be largely informal and include elements of further training. The personal performance of the candidates should be noted, as this may indicate deficiencies in both experience and ability and is a useful factor in overall evaluation.

Each candidate should be tested on various types of mountain terrain, in bad weather conditions, when possible, and during darkness. Candidates must be able to move well in poor conditions, possess reasonable fitness and also attend to the duties of party supervision. Equipment should be examined thoroughly, having regard to general safety, but allowing for personal opinion. Candidate's attitudes to clothing and equipment should also be investigated, some opportunities for this being provided by the written papers.

## **3.5 Campcraft**

### **3.5.1 Candidates**

The scheme requires you to have experience of this topic and to be able to organise and execute camping expeditions of all types. Experience should be gained in a variety of terrain and weather conditions and you should be well practiced in the use of more common items of equipment.

Expeditions incorporate so many aspects of mountain travel that their importance should not be underrated. Innumerable opportunities to practice personal and groups skills occur while away from civilisation for extended periods. A wide knowledge of the problems associated with bad weather and equipment failure is an essential requirement for potential leaders of lightweight or remote camping trips, together with an ability to demonstrate and teach the various elements of campcraft.

You need to be able to fall back upon a great deal of experience when in charge of young people in a mountain campsite. Preparation is largely left to you in this respect, but during the training course, a one night trip will be carried out in the presence of a trainer. During assessment at least one night will be spent out camping and you will be examined in aspects of supervision and safety.

### **3.5.2 Trainers**

Training will be required in the requirements of light upland camping. Training sessions should also extend knowledge of leadership situations, supervision and common problems encountered when camping with young people. Time should be provided for a detailed review of a wide range of equipment, including recent developments as well as the more tried and tested items.

Potential dangers and problems related to equipment should also be identified and discussed. The training expedition will provide opportunities to expand upon the various aspects and should give candidates first-hand experience of good practice in organisation and supervision. This is not always easy to acquire without the guidance of a trainer and is particularly valuable in bad weather. One night must be spent camping in an upland area and candidates should be involved in the planning and preparation beforehand.

### **3.5.3 Assessors**

Assessors must provide adequate opportunity within the assessment period to satisfy themselves of a candidate's all round knowledge and competence and the ability to pass on basic camping skills to others. Each candidate should plan and execute part of a night expedition. The need to see each candidate performing the duties of an expedition leader will dictate a well-structured format and a careful (and fair) allocation of tasks. It is recommended that no more than two persons share a tent, so that individual skills can be more easily observed.

Camping will usually involve one overnight, but may sometimes involve two, at the discretion of the Course Director.

Other aspects of the overall assessment will be covered during expedition. Assessors may wish to provide opportunities for movement at night, navigation, emergency procedures and problems such as the supervision of youngsters in difficult weather. There should be no special emphasis on moving great distances under load.

## **3.6 Security on Steep Ground**

### **3.6.1 Candidates**

There is an established need for mountain leaders to be able to operate safely on steep ground, not necessarily through choice but because circumstances have forced the group onto such terrain. In these circumstances you must be able to safeguard your group and be able to assess your own limitations and those of the group. Mountains are extremely irregular and it is often not easy to define what 'steep ground' is. The ground often used by assessors is broken, vegetated slopes with a fair proportion of visible rock, some loose some solid. It is not the ground of graded rock climbs.

You will need to be proficient when descending as well as ascending this type of ground. The need for experience of a range of mountain terrain cannot be overemphasised. It is one thing to know from past experience the quirks of a mountain – a very different thing to encounter them en route and have to make decisions about how best to proceed. You should be familiar with techniques for managing less-experienced people on steep ground, without the use of a rope. In this scheme the rope is carried for use in an emergency only.

Candidates often fail to impress assessors, and in turn would not impress their group, regarding simple tasks with the rope such as uncoiling, preparing the rope and knot-tying. These are elementary skills which can be practiced anywhere and you should aim for a high standard in these aspects. A more difficult skill is the ability to choose a safe and suitable anchor since this reflects considerable experience – there is no room for serious error here.

Assessors will accept any safe method in using the rope. The ability to set up an indirect belay to a given spike of rock is less important than your ability to assess whether such a technique would be appropriate.

### **3.6.2 Trainers**

This aspect of the syllabus is, for many candidates, completely new and will need to be taught in a sympathetic manner. It is recommended that the emphasis is placed on descending steep ground rather than ascending it, since this is the most likely situation in which a group might be unexpectedly on steep ground. With comfort and educational principles in mind, the terrain chosen should not be intimidating. Trainers who continually strive for realism should always consider the outcome of an unguarded moment or a lapse of concentration.

While it is obviously important to train candidates in rope handling and knot tying, this must not overshadow training the skills of anchor selection, group management and decision-making on steep ground – also techniques for avoiding the use of the rope. They may never have handled a rope before, yet by the end of the course, must be aware of the level of skill and judgement that will be required to become a qualified mountain leader. Trainers must draw upon their own experience to convince candidates, many of whom may believe they will never take a group to steep ground, that there are group management and rope skills which they can acquire and which might one day be invaluable.

#### **Training Topics for Unroped Security**

- Route choice & evaluation of different types of terrain and underlying rock
- Risks management: likelihood versus the consequences of a slip.
- Position of the leader within the group in descent, ascent and traversing.
- Group management skills.
- Anticipating awkward / serious moves and nervous individuals.

#### **Training topics for Roped Security**

- Suitability and types and sizes of rope, rope management and appropriate knots.
- Selection and testing of suitable anchor points.
- Methods of tying in, tying on and belaying.
- Tactics in descent, ascent and traversing situations.
- Abseiling without a safety rope, on moderate terrain. Abseiling is for the leader only and not for group members.

The particular rope systems adopted will not necessarily be those of the climber. While candidates with climbing experience have advantages and can help in training others, there is a danger of adopting inappropriate techniques e.g. the leader always being tied to the rope, expecting anchor point to be within easy reach of the stance etc. The Board recommends that the rope itself be a minimum 9mm diameter and between 25 and 45 metres long. Where 11mm rope is used because of centre regulations, careful explanation must be given since it can be confusing to recommend one type and train with another.

The syllabus expects proficiency with rope alone, since this is the minimum that a leader should have in his/her rucksack. However the use of additional equipment, particularly the sling and locking karabiner may be discussed and demonstrated. While there can be benefits if this equipment is carried at all times, they must be balanced against the issues of carrying extra emergency gear, the fact that in the wrong hands it is nothing more than an unlucky tailsman, and the fact that it can place greater emphasis on the technique of direct belaying which is not without its pitfalls.

### **3.6.3 Assessors**

Steep ground provides many opportunities to test a candidate's ability to manage a group as well as handle a rope, even when that group consists only of fellow candidates. Since there is no clear demarcation between easy and steep ground, opportunities may arise throughout the course to examine this ability to manage the group. Assessors should capitalise on such situation.

The skills of good group management on steep ground, including the positioning of the leader and the many forms of physical support which do not involve the rope are far more likely to be used by a leader than any of the rope skills. Part of the test should therefore be allotted to testing the candidate on suitable terrain without the use of the rope.

When looking at the use of the rope, assessors must be satisfied about the candidate's judgment and attitude to it. Assessors must not place extra emphasis upon this aspect of the syllabus, nor should the atmosphere or setting be unduly intimidating. They should help the candidates tackle the problems in a reasonable relaxed state of mind with a reasonable amount of time to complete the task. Because there will always be technical variations between trainers, assessors should be open minded as to the actual method used. The main criterion is that any safe method, using the rope alone, is acceptable. Particularly where several candidates are being set tasks at the same time, assessors must be aware of the need to retain ultimate control over everyone's safety.

It is desirable that, when the test has finished, a discussion takes place in an informal atmosphere, reviewing methods, attitudes and particularly, general problems associated with mountain rope work. The interchange of ideas at this stage should be considered as training for all concerned. Major weakness in a candidate's judgement and technical skills should be noted carefully and discussed with the Director. Some omissions, such as having never seen an adjustable waist loop, may be retained and the candidate passed. Others such as poor selection of anchors may merit a deferral, but where it is the candidate's judgement about what is or is not steep and serious ground for a group, this may contribute to an overall fail.

### **3.7 Mountain Hazards and Emergency Procedures**

#### **3.7.1 Candidates**

Most mountaineers, however careful they are, will encounter an emergency in the hills sooner or later. The chances of this occurring are increasing as the recreational use of mountainous regions becomes more popular.

You must train yourself thoroughly for common emergency situations. What constitutes an emergency situation is hard to define and will depend largely upon circumstances. An analysis of mountain accidents (see Mountain Rescue Statistics Reports) over the last few years will give an insight into causes and it is useful for potential leaders to read accounts of accidents and draw useful information from any analysis offered. An emergency may not necessarily develop into an accident. It is, for instance not an accident when a leader runs out of daylight but it is an emergency and must be coped with, both by leader and followers.

Emergency situations often develop into accidents, usually as a direct result of incorrect responses. Leaders are bound to have extra pressures applied when an emergency occurs within their group. Potential for mistakes is high and the outcome of an error of judgement is more likely to be disastrous. Potential leaders therefore must be quite clear as to what responses are required for any given emergency on a mountain journey. Practice sessions after the training course should not be conducted whilst carrying out the duties of an actual leader and experiments are best reserved for personal excursions. The crossing of streams and rivers is an everyday issue on the hills. The candidate must learn by experience the most appropriate approach to each water crossing, to appreciate that novices are often nervous on stepping stones and when to draw the line between a certain safe crossing and the likelihood of a group member being swept off their feet.

The Irish Mountain Rescue Organisation publishes a useful hand-book which should be acquired and read.

### **3.7.2 Trainers**

Trainers should perhaps, after reading the candidates' logbooks, draw upon the specific experience of the group when illustrating the various types of emergency which may be encountered. River Crossings (unroped) should be trained practically, partly to acquaint candidates with the skills they will need if trapped by water in a very remote part but also because many candidates do not appreciate the power of even a small stream. The fact that matters can get out of control very quickly and that fatalities continue to occur in this area should be emphasised.

Accident procedures should be covered in detail and procedures in emergency situations dealt with as time allows. They can both be incorporated into indoor discussion and tutorial sessions, but emphasis must be placed upon the practical aspects of as many different kinds of emergency as possible and candidates encouraged to become involved in realistic exercises. A list of possible emergencies could never be definitive, so a well-balanced and informative programme must be built into the training course as a whole.

Training for emergency situations should not be restricted to specially allocated periods but should be spread throughout the whole course. While it is impossible to cover all contingencies, the majority of emergencies fall into a small number of well-defined categories. Even a minor incident, say at a remote campsite, can develop into a grave emergency and trainers should do their best to cover all possibilities. Candidates should be given advice about further training and given constructive ideas as to how to gain the relevant experience. Emergency bivouacs are valuable exercises, but leave everyone feeling very weary the next day.

#### **Some Training Topics**

- when self-help is or is not appropriate
- management of the whole group when say, only one member has been injured.
- methods of contacting the rescue services and information that they require.
- leader equipment with respect to dealing with and avoiding emergencies.

### **3.7.3 Assessors**

Generally speaking assessors will have little difficulty in examining this aspect of the syllabus. Problems may, however, arise in deciding how much material to cover or how realistic the situations should be. Critics of the scheme suggest that there is too much emphasis on emergencies and not enough on avoiding them.

When posing examination situations the assessor must be open minded as to how the candidate may respond and accept that there will be many options open. Indeed, posed situations should identify the candidate's ability to vary responses and not to be textbook orientated. This lends itself to oral

examination, particularly in groups, when differences of opinion may arise. Assessors will gain much from listening to opinionated discussion and may be able to draw candidates into decision-making based upon fictitious incidents.

Sessions of this type should be used to identify weaknesses of experience, but not weaknesses of judgement and should NOT be used to make pass/fail decisions. There should be no doubt about the candidate's knowledge and ability regarding accident procedure and a sensible attitude must be displayed regarding the dangers and problems encountered in river crossings.

### **3.8 Weather**

#### **3.8.1 Candidates**

The weather component, although of a theoretical nature, is predominantly practical in its application and forms an inherent part of the decision-making process. Numerous emergencies, occasionally leading to disastrous consequences, have occurred as a result of either ignorance of impending weather conditions or inappropriate responses to prevailing conditions.

Conversely, an enjoyable day can sometimes be achieved after a poor start because the leader has foreseen an improvement. You should develop an interest in elementary meteorology and follow daily forecasts for your area, relating these to the observed weather conditions and changes. In this way, awareness and experience can be developed, which may eventually be translated into a better understanding of weather conditions in mountain areas.

You are expected to know how and where to obtain forecasts. You are expected to be able to interpret those forecasts in terms of the mountain area that you propose to walk in and to be able to predict and if appropriate modify your route if serious weather related hazards arise e.g. snow/ice, flooded rivers, storm force winds etc. You should also be able to interpret television and newspaper (media) weather maps and recognise basic cloud forms and their relevance, together with associated weather changes.

#### **3.8.2 Trainers**

Whilst candidates may be expected to have an understanding of simple media forecasting, the trainer has a responsibility to lead them into the details of mountain weather. Bearing in mind that it is a complex subject, and often poorly understood by mountaineers, effort should be made to enlighten candidates regarding simple forecasting in relation to mountain phenomena.

It is suggested that candidates should have access to daily forecasts and in the presence of their trainer, interpret that information for the day's activity. At least one lecture should be given during the course and this should have a strong visual impact. A list of subjects is offered here as a guide to lecture content:

- weather in mountainous regions:
  - wind, rainfall and temperature;
  - cloud formation and interpretation;
  - depressions and frontal activity
  - synoptic charts;
  - anticyclones and associated weather;
  - sources of information and their relative value;
  - personal observations;
  - weather related hazards such as snow/ice rivers in spate, etc.;
  - further reading. Emphasis must be given to basic information such as sourcing forecasts and practical route planning in the light of serious weather related hazards arising.

Opportunities should be exploited throughout the course to observe prevailing conditions, compare with forecast and encourage analysis and discussion. During or following a course, the trainer should ask the candidates to review the weather and implications for safety if conditions differed significantly.

### **3.8.3 Assessors**

Candidates often have difficulty in this subject and will usually have weaknesses in their detailed knowledge of mountain weather. Assessors should bear in mind that this subject although having an important bearing on any outdoor activity, is relatively scientific and that qualified meteorologists sometimes get it wrong!

Within this scheme, weather knowledge must be related to the practical needs of a mountain leader. It is therefore suggested that candidates be asked to produce a simple analysis of the weather over a three day period at home – this should include the use of weather maps, radio forecasts and involve a general reading of the situations as well as how the weather may effect their local mountain range.

During assessment, assessors should make use of available time for further training and discussion. Candidates should be given access to daily forecasts and questioned regarding their own interpretations. When making final reports, assessors must be guided by the term ELEMENTARY which



appears in the syllabus and allow good sense to prevail. Technical knowledge is of relatively minor importance but candidates should be able to relate significant weather hazards to route choice and planning.

### **3.9 Background Information**

#### **3.9.1 Candidates**

A leader can make a hillwalk much more interesting and educational for a group if they have a basic knowledge of topics such as the mountain environment and mountaineering history. It is obviously impossible to be an expert in all areas related to the mountain environment but you should try to research some areas in which you have a particular interest. This may be in areas such as the flora and fauna of the mountains and bogs, geology, geomorphology, history or folklore. Many walking guides and other books provide much interesting reading.

You will also be in contact with people who wish to take up hillwalking as a sport and who are keen to learn about all aspects of the sport. You should keep up-to-date with items of current interest to walkers through reading the Irish Mountain Log and other related magazines.

#### **3.9.2 Trainers**

Throughout the training course, trainers should take the opportunity to discuss aspects of the mountain environment whenever appropriate examples are seen on the hill. Trainers can stimulate an interest and curiosity in the mountain environment among candidates and make them aware of the vast amount of information which is available in this area. A selection of relevant books could be made available for reading during the training course.

Discussion on mountaineering history and other items can easily be included as part of the walks. Depending on the environmental knowledge of the trainer, it may be beneficial to have an expert on the mountain environment who will contribute during a session on the hill.

Trainers could also ask candidates to research relevant topics prior to the training course and candidates would then make informal presentations during the course.

#### **3.9.3 Assessors**

A candidate's background knowledge can be assessed through the allocation of mini-talks while on the hill. Candidates would generally select the topics as it is unreasonable to expect candidates to have a knowledge of all aspects of the mountain environment. However, candidates should have carried out basic research on the particular area in which the assessment is being held and demonstrate an interest and knowledge of several aspects of the mountain environment and mountaineering.

### **3.10 Leading Young People**

#### **3.10.1 Candidates**

Leaders owe a greater duty of care to those under 18, that of a responsible parent. While you may not plan to lead young people in the mountains, as a Mountain Leader you should have a basic knowledge of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and should be familiar with the MI Good Practice and Child Protection Policy. These documents provide guidelines for working with children and vulnerable adults, including possible signs of abuse and what to do if you suspect abuse. However, the main focus of both documents is on ensuring that sport is safe and fun for young people, and always conducted in a spirit of fair play.

#### **3.10.2 Trainers**

Mountain Leader Training Courses should include a practical session covering the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, MI Good Practice and Child Protection Policy; child protection issues and an outline of how to recognise abuse and what to do about it. Trainers should take a positive approach to these issues, emphasising the importance of ensuring that activities are child-centred and deliver a positive experience of sport for young people. An opportunity for discussion should be included. It should be made clear to candidates that this is not Child Protection training, simply an awareness raising session. Where candidates are, or will be, working with children it is their employer's responsibility to ensure that they receive appropriate Child Protection Training. While some candidates may insist that they have no interest in leading young people in the hills, MTBI requires that all Mountain Leader candidates should have a basic knowledge of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and should be familiar with the MI Good Practice and Child Protection Policy.

#### **3.10.3 Assessors**

In the selection of scenarios for discussion with candidates, effort should be made to include situations involving children. The assessment is another opportunity to emphasise the responsibilities of a Mountain Leader in this regard. As this element is new to the syllabus, allowance should be made for candidates who did not have a Child Protection session during their ML training. Such candidates should be directed towards the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and MI Good Practice and Child Protection Policy for further information. Assessors should emphasise that the inclusion of Leading Young People in the Mountain Leader Syllabus is primarily to ensure that leaders understand the importance of taking a child-centred approach to their activities. The Assessor should appreciate that Child Protection is a difficult and emotive issue, and this is accentuated where candidates are under pressure in an assessment situation. While candidates should have a basic knowledge of child protection issues and child-centred policies, it is the responsibility of employers to determine the suitability of candidates to lead children.

## 3.11 General Advice

### 3.11.1 Candidates

These notes are aimed at Assessment Candidates, but they should also help to inform Training Candidates. As Part 1 explains, gaining the ML, Award involves registering, attending a training course and then an assessment course which gives candidates the opportunity to prove to themselves that they can operate as mountain leaders to a nationally recognised standard. While these notes talk of assessment standard, they are also outlining the minimum standard required of a practising mountain leader.

The following notes give details of assessment courses. The essence of any advice is simply 'to do what you know' and leave the job of interpreting your actions to the assessor. The assessment course is a three day test run by a MTBI recognised provider.

Assessors will be allocated to small groups of candidates, no more than four at any one time. You should be examined by at least two assessors, although generally one will be the main examiner. The assessors task will be to set problems related to syllabus content and observe your reaction's to these situations. They have no desire to fail people unnecessarily and will endeavour to get the best out of candidates in all circumstances. All aspects of the syllabus may be covered but usually lack of time prohibits total examination of every topic. You should therefore expect to be examined more thoroughly in subjects which commonly pose problems.

**Common problem areas for candidates:** Unsuccessful candidates often show weakness in the following areas of the syllabus:

- Navigation – night and day (particularly failure to respond well after errors),
- Security on steep ground (especially basic skills such as knots),
- Party supervision (particularly in bad weather or on difficult terrain),
- Logbook experience and presentation.

**Route selection:** Since everyone can make mistakes, isolated errors are not normally grounds for failure, but persistent mistakes, however minor may well lead to a deferral/fail. Assessors are often interested in your ability to recover from them. If you suddenly realise that you have erred in some manner, you should bring the matter quietly to the attention of the assessor.

**Theory Paper:** Written tests of some form may be given in advance or during the course and should be considered as diagnostic tests i.e. illustrating strengths or weaknesses. They will not determine the final result but will aid the assessors when considering the choice of tasks to be set in the course. It is most likely that these tests will be related to subjects such as:

- Access and Conservation
- Background Knowledge,
- Mountain Weather and Equipment.

**Assessment Results:** At the end of the assessment course you will normally be interviewed and informed of the recommendation that will be made to MTBI. You should note this down for further reference. These are three possible outcomes to the assessment:

- Pass
- Deferral (in maximum of two areas) and
- Fail.

A **Deferral** is awarded when 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. You must be re-examined in the specified aspect(s), usually within a specified time period. Please note that if you are deferred on more than two separate occasions you will have to do a full reassessment of three days.

A **Fail** is awarded where the candidate's performance has been generally weak or the necessary attributes and experience have not been shown. Please expect a time lapse of several weeks between assessment and receipt of an official MTBI result.

**Appeals Procedure:** Candidates who are unhappy about aspects of their assessment or training should discuss the issue with the Course Director. If this does not fully resolve the problem, the candidate can contact the Secretary, MTBI, at the MI Office for discussion and additional clarification. Following this the candidate should write to the board with details of the appeal.

### 3.11.2 Trainers

Trainers are individually responsible for a group of candidates for a substantial part of the training course. They must all be mature people who have worked extensively with 'near novice' groups, have broad experience of all aspects of the syllabus, are well-informed about the scheme in general and are qualified Mountain Leaders, Instructors or Guides.

Trainers require a great deal of experience to draw on when faced with searching questions from candidates, perhaps regarding group supervision and safety on potentially dangerous grounds or under extreme weather conditions. This experience needs to be kept up to date on a personal, as well as professional level.

Trainers should identify areas of syllabus content which require special emphasis and they should weigh the experience of individuals against group requirements. They should also elicit from experienced assessors what areas of the syllabus usually provide difficulties for candidates. It is imperative that trainers do not work in isolation, and preferable that they have worked alongside experienced training and assessment staff beforehand, as well as attending relevant BOS workshops / seminars.

**Ratios and numbers on courses:** An overall staffing ratio of no more than 1:4 is required for training and assessment courses. Training courses rely on the candidates and their collective experience as well as on the trainers themselves. Very small groups of candidates may not therefore derive maximum benefit from a training course and directors should not run courses for less than four candidates. Some aspects of the syllabus pose particular difficulties for candidates while practicing outside the supervision of trainers and thus particular emphasis should be placed on those aspects during the training course, which will include:

- High level navigation in poor conditions,
- Navigation on rough and unfamiliar terrain,
- Aspects of leadership and group management.
- Security on steep ground
- Emergency Procedures.

**Approaches to teaching:** Many of the above require technical skills such as knot tying to be taught before the more difficult and subjective aspects can be examined; trainers must ensure that sufficient time is allowed for the 'when and where' as well as the 'how'. Parts of the syllabus may be covered by detailed lecture sessions but ample opportunity should be provided for questions and discussions. Asking candidates to research specific areas of syllabus and give short presentations may also be a worthwhile task.

Trainers will have their own ideas regarding lecture topics but these should be related to syllabus content and tend to cover those subjects which are not easily studied outside the training course. However, lectures should not be given in isolation – be they be on equipment, weather or access, trainers should ensure that these lectures are integrated with the practical content.

The course should be structured to provide a progressive learning platform for candidates. Many topics will be completely new to some so the programme needs to allow them the time to assimilate all the information. The end of course debrief should preferably involve individual interviews. Any gaps in experience/knowledge should be identified by a tick list of requirements. Candidates should be given an actions list outlining what they should work on before assessment.

Registration requirements include having passed the Mountain Skills Assessment and familiarity with the ML syllabus, which explains that the course is for potential leaders. It is recommended that candidates should have obtained at least one third of the experience in requirement no. 7, prior to attending ML1, training course.

Trainers are at liberty to vet potential candidates in order to ensure the above and should contact MTBI if there are any problems.

### **3.11.3 Assessors**

The role of the assessors can be a rewarding one, creating situations in which candidates can prove to themselves that they are able to cope with many of the eventualities they hope they never have to face when leading real groups. Even where candidates are weak, the assessor can do a good job of ensuring that this is illustrated clearly and that the candidates are left knowing their strengths and how to develop and improve the areas not currently up to standard. This role calls for mature, experienced leaders, whose views will be respected by candidate and assessors alike.

Broad experience will allow assessors to examine the candidate's solutions to a task with objectivity and thus avoid a dogmatic, blinkered approach. Every effort should be made to minimise the pressure of assessment and to understand its effects. Assessors need to have not only personal experience of being assessed, but also up-to-date memories of what it feels like to be on unfamiliar ground, having to make decisions with uncertain outcomes. Because of the need to examine many aspects of the syllabus, assessments will always be to some extent or other, artificial. It is a fundamental part of the course that the respective roles of the candidates and the assessors are fully explained.

Many candidates under assessment feel that they are the least competent member of the party and find it very difficult to take on a leadership role. It should be pointed out that if assessors need three days to determine who is a mountain leader then the candidates themselves can make no judgements. They must be encouraged not to make assumptions about their peers and to act responsibly when leading them. Candidates will also try to work out what the assessor is 'really trying to find out' when setting a particular task and their minds may wander from the job in hand to what every minute twitch and tremor of the assessor really means

Always brief the candidate beforehand and discuss the task until both sides know and agree on what is being asked for and how everyone will know when it is complete. Then allow the candidate to get on with it without interrupting or compromising their role as leader. When the opportunity comes to debrief the candidates (normally at the end of each day) it is also important to allow them REAL opportunities to reply to any comments about their performance. In discussing the candidate's performance, assessors should not talk in terms of passing or failure since this can only be determined at the end of course.

The relationship between candidate and assessor requires frankness. Assessors are only interpreting candidates actions and this interpretation needs to be explained. Sometime should be spent in conversation with the candidate, not so much as an oral test but in an attempt to get to know the philosophy of the person, so that the reasoning behind his or her judgements may be better understood. It is all too easy to hide behind the more palatable, objective aspects of the assessment such as an inability to find stream junctions or tie safe knots. Greater experience is needed if reservations are to be expressed about candidates' ability, for example, to communicate safely with their group, effectively manage them on steep ground or correctly judge what kind of terrain the group can safely negotiate.

Assessors should make written notes regarding each candidate, both positive and negative, at regular intervals. Candidates should be learning about themselves as well as about their peers throughout the course. Wherever possible further training should also be given to candidates by the assessor. However the assessor's primary role is to decide whether someone is up to the standard of the Mountain Leader Award and there may be times when assessors need every minute of their day to find this out.

Candidates have much to gain from personal contact with assessors and any opportunity to enhance the knowledge or ability of candidates should be used to full advantage. Candidates should not necessarily be censured because of mistakes but rather because of their inability to cope with the aftermath and to correct them. Assessors should differentiate between fundamental errors of judgement and simple technical errors: the latter may often be retrained on the spot whereas the former may require substantial further experience.

### **3.11.4 Director of Assessment**

Every assessment course should be staffed with mature persons, with good all round experience of mountaineering and a lengthy involvement in teaching and leadership of others in the field. Assessors must be holders of the MIA award or higher qualification. Directors should read each submitted logbook critically at the time of application and check for the minimum pre-requirements for assessment. Those whose logged experience falls below the minimum requirements should have their books returned for further entries and resubmission. Applicants who show weaknesses or who have borderline experience, should be informed of this before the beginning of the course, whilst avoiding putting them under undue pressure.

**Pre-course briefing:** A relaxed course briefing is essential, during which a general overview of Part 2 of this booklet should be outlined. Candidates should be reminded of how to handle a situation in which

they realise they have made an error and the appeals procedure in the event of an individual being unhappy with his/her assessment.

Directors must be involved in the planning of each day and maintain a leading role throughout the course. Informal contact with all candidates is recommended. This is particularly desirable with borderline cases. Assessors should be encouraged to give results to the Director as soon as sessions are finished. Any poor performances must be well- documented in order that the Director is satisfied with the verdict and is able to substantiate the result to the candidate.

**Issuing results:** The Director of Assessment must weigh up the different findings and come to a final result: a Pass is applicable where the candidate has performed well and has a good knowledge of the syllabus. Generally a poor performance in basic navigation or an inability to complete the assessment due to a lack of physical fitness will result in a Fail.

Candidates may be deferred in a maximum of two other specified areas. Deferral is relevant 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. This should be seen as a temporary issue, until such a time as the candidate is reassessed. Directors must ensure that anyone in this situation will understand the extent of any reservations held about the ability of the candidate as a mountain leader.

The method of presenting final results to candidates is left entirely to the discretion of the Director. It may, for instance, be inappropriate to hold lengthy debriefs and individual discussions when all candidates have been successful. On the other hand, it will invariably be desirable to offer advice and encouragement to unsuccessful candidates.

It is required that comments made orally are backed up with written advice to the same effect. This should be detailed on the **Defer/Fail Assessment Report Form** that is inserted into the logbook.

Many people will not hear everything being said to them and will need to refer to this written information for the details of the result, advice about further experience and, if reassessment is proposed, details of any pre-requirements.

Assessors should be encouraged to give interim feedback to candidates. However, Directors should not make this compulsory. It should be made clear that each day is not taken in isolation, so scraping through each day may not add up to a pass at the end of the course and conversely, one poor day can often be redeemed by the others. Please read the section – ‘Assessment Paperwork’ for detailed procedures to follow.

**Deferment reports:** A deferred candidate may be re-assessed by a different Course Director and there the Course Report must be comprehensive enough to allow the new Course Director to understand the grounds for deferment.



### 3.12 First Aid Certificates

Certificates should be presented when submitting the logbook. (See Part 1). If, for some reason, a valid certificate is not produced, the Director should issue a deferment with a written proviso stating: 'The Director was not satisfied that the candidate met the syllabus requirements in the following aspects: Possession of a valid First Aid Certificate'.

This deferment can be upgraded when the certificate is produced. Under no circumstances will the award of the ML, be made to candidates who do not hold a current first aid certificate of REC Level 3, Mountain First Aid or equivalent.

### 3.13 Assessment & Training Course – Admin and Paperwork

**Copies of Assessment Reports:** Directors of Assessment must complete each candidates' Assessment Report, together with an online Course Report for MTBI, at least two weeks before a MTBI meeting at which the reports and results must be presented for final approval. Failure to comply may affect the status of the approved provider.

Course Directors retain online copies of these reports, which are essential especially when an outright pass is not awarded, or in case of a subsequent appeal. Where deferred candidates are reassessed by other Course Directors, details of the Deferral will be available from the original assessor's online report. It is therefore critical that this information is retained. In the case of deferred candidates, the areas in which they were deferred should be noted in the assessment report in order to inform the subsequent assessor.

## 4.0 Historical Note

The Association for Adventure sports (AFAS) was set up in 1969 to co-ordinate the objectives of the adventure sport national bodies. AFAS ran the initial Irish Mountain Leader courses in 1970 but when the Federation of Mountaineering Clubs of Ireland (FMI) was formed in 1971, it appointed a subcommittee, Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) or The Irish Mountain Training Board to be responsible for the training and the standards in Irish mountaineering. Whilst the FMI represented clubs both north and south of the border, training in Northern Ireland was the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Mountain Training Board which ran ML scheme closer to the UK Mountain Training Boards.

The first 'Mountain Leadership Training Board' was convened in the UK in 1964 at the instigation of the Central Council for Physical Recreation Outdoor Activities Committee, after consultation with interested parties. It was set up to administer a certificate of competence in mountain leadership. Its membership comprised the CCPR, the BMC and various individuals and it was chaired by Sir Jack Longland. The scheme was designed to operate throughout England and Wales, with the intention that a parallel scheme should operate in Scotland.

2018 saw the creation of Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI), which administers mountain training for the island of Ireland. MTBI is a full voting member of MTUK and maintains a close relationship with all the MT Boards with MTBI attending meetings of Mountain Training UK. Shared Mountain Training schemes are offered across the UK & Ireland by the respective Mountain Training Boards.

## **5.0 Appendices**

### **5.1 Theory Papers**

Some important aspects of leadership and mountaineering are not covered specifically by the syllabus requirements and it is essential that candidates do a considerable amount of background preparation. Every candidate has an obligation to try to understand the theory of leadership and delve into the less tangible areas of the syllabus.

This sort of attention to detail will project the leader along avenues which may not be clearly defined within the structure of the award. A written test will be prepared centrally by BOS and circulated to all ML trainers. This will be issued as a home test after the trainee has completed ML2. The purpose of this test is twofold, firstly to encourage the candidates to explore areas of the syllabus which are not usually trained or tested fully due to time constraints and secondly as diagnostic information for further exploration, if necessary during the practical test.

The candidates will complete the written paper and submit it when applying for assessment. Assessment staff will then correct the papers and insert results in logbook. No assessor should fail candidates for poor performance in theory tests alone. Rather, the result of the test should be discussed critically with the candidates concerned and any conclusions used as an aid to the judgement of his or her overall performance. Furthermore, some candidates will have particular difficulty in responding to the written test and oral testing should be considered as an alternative. Candidates should be made aware of their results and whenever possible their shortcomings discussed individually.

### **5.2 Logbook**

The digital logbook demonstrates at assessment that the Board's requirements have been fulfilled. It is an essential tool to help trainers advise candidates on specific further experience needed before assessment. All entries should refer to days spent in the mountains. Lengthy route descriptions, with bearing or grid reference, photographs or names of walking partners are unnecessary. Other walking experience and rock climbing should be summarised only briefly. Experience prior to training will also be taken into account by the Director of Assessment. Most successful candidates usually have a total well in excess of 40-50 mountain days.

### **5.3 Administrative Notes for Course Directors**

To assist the efficient running of the scheme, these notes are intended as a guide to Course Directors as to what paperwork they should complete for the Board. They also cover the principal conditions of the scheme.

### **5.3.1 ML Training Courses**

Mountain Leader training courses may only be run and directed by personnel, who have been approved by the Board to do so. The criteria on which Board approval is given are outlined in “Becoming a provider” details on the MI website.

### **5.3.2 ML Assessment Courses**

Mountain Leader Assessments will be administered by Mountaineering Ireland and approved course provider will be appointed to deliver the courses. Tollymore National Outdoor Training Centre offers Mountain Leader Assessments and uses MTBI approved providers to deliver the courses.

Each assessment will be carried out with appropriate safeguards to ensure that where possible the staff of a training centre are not the only ones assessing candidates they themselves have trained. The Director of Assessment should hold at a minimum the MIA Award and the Winter ML award. All other assessors should hold the MIA award or higher.

### **5.3.3 Training Course Paperwork**

Course Directors should ensure that all candidates are registered before starting training.

Course Directors should complete the online training course report and include each candidate as a record of attending training.

A Mountain Leader Training Course Report Form should be completed online after each course.

### **5.3.4 Assessment Reporting**

Directors of Assessment should ensure that all pre-assessment requirements are fulfilled before accepting candidates. The process that will be followed at the end of each Assessment Course is as follows:

- (a) Candidates are debriefed orally with an indication of the likely recommendations to MTBI.
- (b) Staff prepare an online Course Report which included each candidate and reflects the content of the oral debrief. This report is contained as part of the online report and during processing will be emailed to each candidate. In the case of a Deferral or Fail a copy of this report sent to MTBI, will be made available to any future assessors.
- (c) Staff complete an online Course Report containing information such as a venue, numbers, staffing, weather, special factors etc.
- (d) Copies of all reports are recorded online for the MTBI Secretary at least two weeks before MTBI meeting at which assessment is to be processed.

(e) MTBI meeting considers reports (briefly).

The Secretary records the result and approves the awards.

(f) The MI office records details in relevant database and confirms the results to the candidates. In cases of deferral and failure, the Director of Assessment will have informed the candidates of what is required before reapplying.

### **5.3.5 Reports**

Training and assessment providers are required to submit online reports to MTBI, with details of candidates trained and assessed. These are vital for the Board's future planning and to maintain the MTBI Database. Failure to respond will impede the efficiency of the scheme as a whole and could ultimately result in withdrawal of Board approval.

### **5.3.6 Course Format**

Training courses should be of not less than five working days duration. There should be lectures to support practical work, at least one night spent in camp. See sample programmes on following pages.

Assessment courses should last three days with a minimum of one nights camping.

### **5.3.7 Ratios**

In general, the Board expects a staffing ratio of at least one instructor to every 4 candidates, to be applied at training and at assessment. The minimum number of candidates attending courses should normally not be less than four, as smaller groups are not likely to benefit from dynamic group discussions.

### **5.3.8 Continuity of Staff**

The Board expects that staff working on courses do so on a regular basis in order to maintain effectiveness and an element of continuity.

### **5.3.9 Guidance**

Further guidance is available from MTBI.

## **5.4 Sample Training Course Programme**

### **Previous evening: 20.00 Ropework Session**

#### **Day 1**

0915 Course briefing – meet instructors.

Introduction to ML scheme.

0945 Depart for day's scramble. Unroped security on steep ground. Roles and responsibilities of the leader and possible problems.

1700 Return to base.

1930 Mountain Weather.

2030 Discussion – Looking after your group.

Group and camping equipment.

#### **Day 2**

0915 Use of ropes in ML 'Knots and systems'.

1300 River crossing – theory and practical.

1500 Incident and accident procedures – mountain rescue and improvised carries.

1930 Route planning and route cards.

Hypothermia video.

2130 Night Navigation

#### **Day 3**

0915 The Mountain Environment – leading a group on a Mountain day examining mountain flora, fauna, conservation issues, group management and motivation

1630 Pack for expedition

#### **Day 4**

0915 Depart on expedition – navigate to campsite

2100 Night navigation exercise

## **Day 5**

- 0915 Review of night navigation session.
- 0945 Roped and unroped security on steep ground
- 1530 Return to base
- 1600 Briefing for assessment
- 1700 Depart

## **5.5 Sample Assessment Programme**

### **Day 1**

- 0915 Briefing Equipment check. Depart for Assessment area.
- 1000 A full day walk to campsite including navigation on 1:50 000.
- 1800 Set up camp. Dinner
- 2000 Night navigation Session (3-4 hours).

### **Day 2**

- 0930 Strike camp. Micro Navigation. Leadership on steep ground. Candidates are expected to deal with a variety of problems on steep ground with or without the use of a rope.
- 1630 Cook dinner
- 1800 Evacuation planning. Candidates are given an emergency scenario and should plan the evacuation of a casualty and its time frame.
- 2000 Night navigation back to base. Possible overnight camp.

### **Day 3**

- 0930 Additional navigation / security on steep ground work.
- 1600 Debrief and result

## 6.0 Provider Addendums

### 6.1 Insurance and Gaining Experience for your Mountain Leader

A question I am frequently asked is “how do I gain the experience with people I am unfamiliar with, without an award or insurance”? First of all there is no legal requirement to hold any award in the UK or Ireland and this should be clearly pointed out to people you are walking with.

With regard to insurance, here is the response from our insurers:

***“We can confirm that a candidate whilst gaining the relevant experience and/or during the consolidation period would have cover in place providing he/she is a member of MI. He/she would also be covered if he/she was leading others (whether MI members or not) during the consolidation period.***

***When they have gained the qualification and are leading and receiving ‘income’ for the activity they would then have to join the appropriate association in order to access the correct cover”***

I am not in a position to interpret the statement for individual cases so please don’t phone the office asking for more clarification. Like all situations in the murky world of law and insurance “it is open to interpretation and misinterpretation”. It is however clear that you are covered for any ‘third party’ negligence claims against you whilst gaining experience.

I would however still be very clear with the people you are leading or their parents/guardians so that they understand the situation and your level of training and experience. If you are ‘working’ for someone else, even in a voluntary capacity, I would ask if you are covered under their liability insurance because the situation is complicated by who the contract is with especially when there has been an exchange of money somewhere. When a client asks “am I insured” the answer is no they are not personally covered. If they are injured through no fault or negligence of yours, they do not have Mountaineering Ireland Personal Accident cover unless of course they are members of MI.

So here are just a few ways that ML/RCI(SPA) candidates can gain leadership experience.

- Lead walks or run climbing sessions with other clubs and MI members that you don’t know
- Offer your services to help with other experienced leaders. You don’t necessarily have to be the organiser to be the leader.
- Offer to take new members of your club out or those just trying it out.
- Talk to your local outdoor centre or college and offer to assist
- Ask your local scout or guides organisations
- Ask a friend or fellow RCI (SPA)/H&ML/ML trainee to organise a group for you consisting of people you don’t know

## 6.2 The Secret to Becoming a Mountain Leader

“Going to the right place at the right time with the right people is all that matters, what one does is purely incidental” Colin Kirkus

Watching the clouds part as if they were a pair of curtains to reveal the distant vista, or seeing the sun disappear over the distant horizon, and to be honest the excitement of navigating through the mist are what drive me to explore the hills and mountains of Ireland. However, some of my most memorable and rewarding trips have not been with my peers, but while leading and introducing groups of people to the joys of hill walking, expanding their horizons or helping them to learn. During my time as Training Officer for Mountaineering Ireland I met a lot of candidates on ML and WGL assessments so here is some advice for those of you who are already on the schemes and preparing for an assessment. Some of the points may only apply to the ML, if you can't pick those points out then look again at the syllabus.

During your assessment you will be asked to demonstrate your skill, knowledge and understanding of issues related to the leading of groups in terrain within the scope of the award on the hills and mountains of Ireland. Such as navigation, leadership, weather, the mountain environment and emergency procedures. You will be given opportunities to lead sections of a journey and to be led by your fellow candidates. The assessors will endeavour to create as many opportunities as possible for you to demonstrate your competence over the course of the assessment. It is important that you use these opportunities so that the assessors can gain a complete picture of your ability.

**‘Find a mentor’** – Talk to someone who has been through the scheme recently and can help to mentor or encourage you when your enthusiasm wanes and the going gets tough. If you can't find a mentor then think about going on a refresher course before the assessment, especially if the rope work and steep ground elements of the ML are not your forte.

**‘Don't treat it lightly’** - The awards are UK & Ireland leadership awards that are ratified in Europe by the UIAA so take it seriously because the assessors will!

**‘Think like a leader’** - It is a leadership award not a personal navigation award so come with a leaders head on. Gain leadership experience with people that you don't know and with a variety of ages and abilities. A leader is not simply someone who can navigate a group around the hills, but is a role model for others, able to enthuse them about the landscape, the environment and the wildlife encountered. A leader should be able to safely lead others in difficult terrain and cope in a crisis to prevent an epic turning into a disaster.

**Ask the question ‘What if’** – From the moment you wake up to the moment you finish your assessment you should ask yourself ‘what if’. What if someone forgets something? What if my map blows away? What if the weather changes? What if someone slips?

**‘Don't underestimate the importance of a good logbook’** - The logbook is the first thing that an assessor will encounter of you and it reflects your attitude towards the H&ML or ML award. Assessors have to read many logbooks before an assessment so make sure that it is complete and easily readable. If you are unsure contact the Training Office, but remember if you are having doubts about your log book experiences then it is likely that the assessor will also have doubts.



**‘The solution is not always to call Mountain Rescue’** – We should enter the hills ready to be self-sufficient, even as leaders. Some incidents will always require the help of a mountain rescue team, but ask yourself is it absolutely necessary or appropriate to call out a voluntary service when you could solve the problem yourself.

**‘Enjoy yourself’** – Gaining the experience or ‘Quality Hill Days’ to be able to sit the assessment is not a chore if you are a keen hill walker, but what is a ‘quality walk’? That is a bit like asking about a healthy diet - we all know what it is, but whatever way one attempts to put it down in writing it is interpreted differently by each person. Basically it simply means that for someone of H&ML or ML standard fitness, a good hard day in the hills for H&ML and the ‘wilder mountains’ of Ireland for ML with ascents that require stamina, commitment, navigation etc. Anyone who is a serious walker will know what that is like, just like everyone knows what a healthy diet really is. However there are experiences we have in the hills that

may make a shorter day a ‘Quality Hill Day’ such as turning back from a peak because of poor weather and having to navigate in difficult terrain to get down safely. Because it is a UK & Ireland award make sure you have walked in a variety of the mountainous areas of the UK & Ireland such as Kerry, Connemara, Donegal, the Mourne, Snowdonia, Scottish Highlands.

**‘Spend some time under canvas’** – Wild camping is an essential element of the ML scheme and those that have little experience of camping far from the road seem to struggle. So go and spend a few nights away from it all so you feel totally comfortable sorting yourself out to camp when it is dark, wet and windy!

**‘Buy some good waterproofs!’** – Don’t practice navigation solely in good weather it is important that you make the effort to go out in the dark and the mist to develop your skills. The navigation element is preparing you for the rare time that you will be late down in the darkness and rain with a cold wet group trailing behind you. Your navigation skills then need to be second nature.

**‘Be passionate’** – You are not expected to be an expert on environmental matters, plants, animals, geology, history, folklore, weather etc., but you are expected to be able to talk enthusiastically to a group about these subjects with a basic understanding. To give you an example - if you don’t know what cirrus clouds are or what a front is and how they relate to the weather forecast then you will need to read more books or if the question “give some quality advice to a novice on hill walking equipment” leaves you speechless then visit more outdoor shops and investigate what gear is available.

**‘Sweat a bit’** – You must come fit enough to walk with a loaded rucksack (complete with camping gear for the ML!) for at least 6 to 8 hours a day and be able to act as a leader and look after people on steep ground. If you are not adequately fit the assessment will be difficult and stressful.

**‘Confidence is the key’** – If you come well prepared, with a good logbook and all the pre-requisites ticked, the assessment should be a breeze, maybe even enjoyable! Candidates that usually struggle on assessment come with the bare minimum of experience and poor background knowledge; their logbooks are poorly filled in, their fitness is poor and their leadership experience is at a minimum. When it says minimum in the handbook it means just that, good candidates usually have much more.

## **6.3 Running a Training Course**

### **A. Define the context of the Mountain Leader.**

At the start of the training courses, the need for candidates to adopt the position of a leader versus participant should be emphasised.

Candidates should also be asked to consider how they would teach some of the skills they are being trained in. ML holders will be asked to teach navigation, efficient movement, etc.

1. Present a relevant incident case study to look at and discuss with the trainee ML's. This helps trainees adopt the role of a mountain leader rather than personal mountaineer. Trainees are asked to put themselves in the position of the leader in the incident. To help candidates to do this- questions can be asked, e.g.

- a) How they would deal with the situation?
- b) What do they see as the key learning points?

2. Highlight, at the start of training that they are already navigators and should look at how they might pass on/teach navigation skills to their future groups both generally and in formal training courses. Teaching others will drill their own skills and give a focus to skills they already feel competent at.

### **B. Demonstrate the importance of using a variety of instructional styles and settings.**

ML Trainers use a variety of instructional styles, settings, approaches. E.g. Describe a skill in the classroom, practice it in isolation on the hill, apply it within a journey on the hill and review the skill back in the classroom after gaining experience.

Candidates need to be made aware of this deliberate process to allow them to do the same when teaching their future students.

The trainee will be aware of better learning for themselves, for the students they go on to teach and will better self-direct their own consolidation period.

### **C. Learning preferences and leadership styles.**

Use the discussion on leadership styles to raise awareness of the range learning preferences of themselves, their peers and their group.

**Please contact me with any further questions about the scheme.**

**Jane Carney**  
**Training Officer**  
**01 6251115**  
[jane@mountaineering.ie](mailto:jane@mountaineering.ie)

## Mountain Leader Skills Checklist

Topic	Can do
<p><b>2.1 Party Leadership and the Responsibilities of the Party Leader</b></p> <p><b>Candidates must be conversant with the main areas of responsibilities of the mountain party leader, particularly for the care and safety of the party as follows:</b></p> <p>2.1.1 General Responsibilities of the Party Leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To parents/guardians where appropriate, to individual party members, and to the party as a whole.</li> <li>• To the sponsoring Authority or Committee and to the Head Teacher or Warden or Club organiser sanctioning the expedition.</li> <li>• To the general public, to the environment, to local residents or farmers and to the mountaineering fraternity.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.1.2 Specific Responsibilities of the Party Leader</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the underlying aims and objectives and to define the specific purpose of the expedition.</li> <li>• To carry out initial planning e.g., to obtain parental consent, authority clearance, personal and medical information, costing, insurance arrangements.</li> <li>• To complete detailed preparations, e.g. plan routes, obtain access permission, weather forecasts and brief the group.</li> <li>• To ensure the group is properly equipped.</li> </ul>	

### **2.1.3 Operational Responsibilities of the Party Leader in the mountains**

- To provide a safe and rewarding experience for each party member through;
  - involvement, interest, enjoyment and achievement
  - imparting appropriate technical skills and competence
  - fostering environmental awareness
- To meet the changing needs of the group and its individual members by;
  - observation, anticipation and good judgement
  - sensitivity to the state of the party and of its members, with particular regard to its health and fitness
  - maintaining confidence and enthusiasm despite uncertainty or stress
  - adopting leadership styles appropriate to the situation
- To manage the group effectively by setting and reviewing targets by;
  - positive decision-making
  - delegation where appropriate
  - proper group control and discipline
  - good communication
- To make suitable route choices, interpret and evaluate terrain, revising routes where necessary.

### **2.2 Navigation**

- Revision and development of basic skills in Mountain Skills syllabus.
- Development of contour interpretation skills.
- Choice and application of techniques: attack points, collecting features, aiming off, sweep approaches etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exact use of timing/pacing and compass work.</li> <li>• Relocation skills: slope aspect, spiral and box searches.</li> <li>• Route planning with reference to: aims, terrain, weather, party ability, escape routes and hazards</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.3 Walking Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual skills – fitness, rhythm, foot placing, conservation of energy, balance and co-ordination.</li> <li>• Party skills – leader and tail-man, psychology of the group, corporate strength, group management.</li> <li>• Party procedure on different terrain e.g. scree, narrow ridge, steep broken slope.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.4 Personal Equipment</b></p> <p>Personal equipment required for mountain expeditions (both high and low level) taking into account weather conditions such as wind, temperature and humidity and giving consideration to design characteristics such as: (i) material (ii) reaction to conditions (iii) weight and bulk when dry and wet (iv) care and maintenance.</p> <p><b>2.5 Camp craft</b></p> <p><b>2.5.1 Equipment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different type and make of; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– tents, sleeping bags, stoves, rucksacks and other light-weight equipment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Selection of equipment required for various types of expedition.</li> <li>• Packing and carrying personal and communal equipment.</li> </ul>	

## **2.5.2 Food**

- Selection of suitable foods, quantities and packaging.
- Preparation and cooking of foods.

## **2.5.3 Other Skills**

- Selection of campsite, including environmental considerations.
- Siting and pitching of tent.
- Organisation of camp and individuals tents.
- Group and personal hygiene.
- Use of huts, bothies and other shelters.
- Bivouacs: planned and emergency.

## **2.6 Security on Steep Ground**

Steep mixed terrain is often encountered in the hills. Leaders should endeavour to avoid the use of a rope. However situations do arise, mostly in descent where the rope may be necessary to safeguard members of the party.

Any safe method used should involve the use of rope alone.

### **2.6.1 Choice of line and supervision of party**

- Route selection
- Movement on mixed terrain.
- Assessing risk
- Objective hazard (stone fall, wet grass etc.).
- Different visual limitations and hazards in ascent and descent.
- Negotiating steep ground without the use of a rope (in descent, traversing and ascent)
- Position of the leader and procedure.
- Position of group members (safe havens etc.)
- Consideration of the likelihood and/or consequences of a slip.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Means and limitations of offering assistance.</li> <li>*Negotiating steep ground with the use of a rope (in descent, traversing and ascent)</li> <li>• Suitability of different types and sizes of rope, rope management and appropriate knots.</li> <li>• Selection of suitable anchor points.</li> <li>• Methods of belaying.</li> <li>• Abseiling, without a safety rope, on moderate terrain. Abseiling is for the leader only and not for group members.</li> <li>• Confidence roping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– safeguarding one party member on non-serious terrain with both the leader and the party member moving.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.7 Emergency Procedures</b></p> <p>An understanding of the following medical conditions, their causes, signs, symptoms, prevention and treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Hypothermia ('Exposure') and its treatment both in the field and at the base.</li> <li>• Cold injuries</li> <li>• Heat disorders</li> <li>• Common medical problems, e.g., asthma, diabetes, blisters, sprains</li> <li>• Procedure in the event of an accident and methods of contacting the emergency services.</li> <li>• Methods of search and evacuation</li> <li>• Improvised mountain rescue equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– application and limitations</li> <li>– emergency bivouac skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

<p><b>2.8 Mountain Hazards</b></p> <p>2.8.1 Awareness of the Major Environmental Hazards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Hazards and how to deal with them, including loose rocks, flooding, lightning, marshy ground, snow.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.8.2 River Crossing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of weather forecast and maps to predict potentially dangerous crossings</li> <li>• Dangers and methods of avoidance.</li> <li>• Finding the best crossing points.</li> <li>• Weighing up the consequences versus the likelihood of group members being swept away.</li> <li>• Choosing appropriate tactics.</li> <li>• Group briefing, preparation and safety precautions.</li> <li>• Crossing without a rope – e.g., ‘The Huddle’, ‘Line Astern’, ‘Line Abreast’.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.9 Weather</b></p> <p>Candidates must have an elementary knowledge of weather. They must gain experience in relating regional weather forecasts to mountainous areas and develop their ability to make short-term forecasts from observed meteorological conditions. Candidates should be conversant with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources of information on weather.</li> <li>• Elementary interpretation of weather maps.</li> <li>• Weather development associated with major cloud forms, change in wind direction and in pressure.</li> <li>• Effect of mountains on the weather.</li> <li>• Impact of weather on conditions underfoot.</li> <li>• Application of weather knowledge in planning suitable routes.</li> </ul>	



<p><b>2.10 Access and Conservation</b></p> <p>Candidates should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of the multiple uses of upland areas (e.g. hill farming, forestry, water collection, horse riding, grouse shooting, stalking) all of which must be respected by the recreational user.</li> <li>• Appreciate the problems of conservation (e.g. wildlife, plant life and erosion) and be aware of the long term effects of human pressure on the upland environment.</li> <li>• Know how and where to get information about access to wild country (e.g. from National Park Authorities, Coillte, local land owners, MI and other agencies).</li> <li>• Appreciate the significance of lack of rights of way in upland areas, having regard to the fact that a large proportion of these areas are in private ownership.</li> <li>• Understand the nature of specially designated areas and limitation on their use (e.g. National Parks, Nature Reserves and Special Areas of Conservation).</li> <li>• Be familiar with the MI's Good Practice Guide for Walkers and the Leave No Trace programme.</li> </ul> <p><b>2.11 Background Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Leader candidates should be able to display their knowledge about all aspects of mountaineering and the mountain environment e.g. geology, flora and fauna, local history, history of mountaineering, photography.</li> <li>• Details of clubs and organisation.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The origins, development and ethics of mountaineering within Ireland and the UK.</li> </ul> <p>The leader should know about, or have access to information on suitable training organisations, mountaineering clubs, guidebooks and mountain literature.</p>	
<p><b>2.12 Leading Young People</b></p> <p>Mountain Leader candidates should understand the additional responsibilities attached to leading people under the age of 18.</p> <p>All candidates should be aware of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and should be familiar with the MI Good Practice and Child Protection Policy.</p> <p>Candidates should note that these documents are not simply about how to deal with suspected abuse, but about ensuring that activities are child-centred, delivering a positive experience of sport for young people</p>	

## Mountain Leader Assessment Checklist

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Requirements	Done
1. Become a current member of MI or an affiliated club	
2. Personal details page	
3. Personal profile page	
4. First aid certificate ( <i>32hr first aid qualification including an element of assessment, such as Rescue and Emergency Care Standard Award (level 3), Advanced Wilderness First Aid, or courses delivered by HSA providers that are appropriate to the ML environment.</i> )	
5. Mountain Leader Training course report	
6. Personal walks, a minimum of 20 quality mountain days in Mountain Leader terrain	
7. A minimum of 3 mountain areas	
8. A minimum of 2 winter camps	
9. A minimum of 6 days of observation (at least two must be with a MTBI recognised provider)	
10. A minimum of 6 days of progressive leadership	
11. Leading in unfamiliar areas	
12. Variety of groups	
13. Completed a two day group expedition plan + signed plan	
14. Completed a two day group expedition + signed report	
15. Mountain Leader written paper	
16. Read and understood all aspects of the ML syllabus	
17. Read and understood all aspect of MI's Environmental Policy	
18. Read and understood all aspects of MI's Good Practice Guide	
19. Read and understood all aspects of MI's Children's policy	

## Mountain Leader Award

### Experience Requirements

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Please consider the advice given below. Note that the figures given are the absolute minimum and most successful candidates will have well in excess of the experience outlined. The Mountain Leader scheme provides training for any hillwalker who takes responsibility for others in the hills of Ireland and the UK. The scheme does not provide training in rock climbing or winter mountaineering.

#### **Before attending a training course:**

In order to gain the maximum from the ML training course candidates should currently be active in the mountains. It is recommended (but not essential) that trainees amass a number of personal quality mountain days, have travelled through steep broken ground, have assisted with the leading of hill walking parties on mountain journeys and have completed a couple of night navigation sessions post Mountain Skills. It is also recommended that candidates read documents such as the ML's Environmental Policy, Good Practice guide, the BOS ML syllabus and the 'Hill Walking' book by Steve Long as such publications will help increase a candidate's knowledge. Candidates may also wish to practice basic knots and rope handling skills in order to prepare for the Emergency Rope Work elements of the ML scheme.

#### **Consolidation period:**

Between training and assessment candidates should consolidate the skills learned on the training course and continue to gain experience. During this period candidates are advised to log every journey into mountainous country. Candidates are encouraged to display a wide variety of experience in at least 3 different mountain areas and logbook entries should show varying status within groups and a range of weather conditions.

It is recommended that all but the most experienced candidates allow a minimum of twelve months experience between completion of training and assessment. As guidance, successful candidates are likely to have logged at least 60 mountain days **post MSA** gaining leadership and personal experience as well as camping and night navigation experience. Candidates should only attend an assessment when they feel they are personally ready.

#### **Assessment:**

Candidates should not present themselves for assessment until they have:

- fulfilled all minimum requirements as laid down by BOS
- obtained a valid first aid certificate (a 32hr first aid qualification including an element of assessment, such as Rescue and Emergency Care Standard Award (level 3), Advanced Wilderness First Aid, or courses delivered by HSA providers that are appropriate to the ML environment.)
- become a member of the ML or an affiliated mountaineering club

## Mountain Leader Award

### Definition of a Quality Mountain Day / Wild Camping

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#### Quality Mountain Day

A broad definition of a QMD is one which presents new experiences and challenges to a candidate. Such a day would generally consist of the following:

- The candidate is involved in the planning and instigation
- The walk would last at least 5 hours and take place in an unfamiliar area
- The majority of time should be spent above 500m, distance should be over 16km with over 600m of height gain during the day and cover a variety of terrain
- The use of a variety of hill walking techniques
- Adverse weather conditions may be encountered
- Experience must be in terrain and weather comparable to that found in the Irish and UK hills

#### Wild Camping

Wild camping should take place in mountainous terrain remote from roads and habitation. With respect to the requirements of the BOS ML scheme candidates must complete at least two remote winter camps. Winter is defined as beginning on the 1st October and ending on the 31st of March the following year. These overnight experiences should be seen as an opportunity by candidates to explore more remote mountain regions, complete more committing quality mountain days or further develop their night navigational skills. Candidates should familiarise themselves with the use of the broad range of equipment required to undertake a high mountain camp. Candidates should aim to minimise the effect on vegetation and also the effects of pollution through food and human waste. This should be done in accordance with ML's **Practice Guide for Hillwalkers** and the **Leave No Trace** principles. ([www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org))

## Mountain Leader Award

### Sample Log Book Pages

#### Personal Walking In Mountain Leader Terrain

Candidates are required to show evidence of a minimum of 20 walks in Mountain Leader terrain. These walks should take place in at least three different mountain areas. The minimum is not a target.

Candidates will benefit greatly from completing more than the minimum number of walks and including walks which require them to navigate in new and challenging terrain. Walks should be used as an opportunity to practice as many ML skills as possible.

Date: <b>21.12.2009</b>	Starting point: <b>V762856</b> , Route: <b>Lough Acoose, Lough Eigther, Skregmore, Beenkeragh, Carrauntoohil, Caher, Slievenore.</b>
Area: <b>The Reeks</b>	Ending point: <b>V761848, Lough Acoose.</b>
Sheet no. <b>78</b>	Distance travelled: <b>10.2 km's</b> Height gained: <b>1170metres</b>
Status: <b>Equal</b>	Time taken: <b>5hrs 45m</b> Weather: <b>Low cloud, drizzle, Westerly winds 15-20kms</b> Notable events/Evaluation: <b>Difficult / challenging navigation all day!</b>
Date: <b>20.11.2009</b>	Starting point: <b>L912541</b> , Route: <b>Maumgawnagh, Knockaunbaun, Maumahoge, Maumeen, Letterbreckaun, Holywell, Gleniska, Leenaun Hill, Tonalee, Joyce's River</b>
Area: <b>Maumturks</b>	Ending point: <b>L919577</b>
Sheet no. <b>37</b>	Distance travelled: <b>16.8 km's</b> Height gained: <b>1310metres</b>
Status: <b>Solo</b>	Time taken: <b>7hrs</b> Weather: <b>Squally frequent showers, gusty NW 30-35kms</b> Notable events/Evaluation: <b>Tough day, strong bitterly cold winds all day</b>

Status in group: E=equal, M=member, S=solo

N.B Please attach to the back of this page a photocopied section of the map used and highlight the route taken.



## Mountain Leader Award

### Sample Log Book Pages

#### Leading or Assisting Groups in Mountain Leader Terrain

Candidates are required to show evidence of leading at least 6 different walks with a variety of groups (a group is 4 or more people). The walks should fulfill the following: be in at least 2 different mountain areas of Ireland or the UK, involve leadership and navigational judgments and the majority must be with groups with whom the trainee is unfamiliar.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <span style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-right: 5px;">+</span> <div> <p><b>Date:</b> 21.11.2009</p> <p><b>Area:</b> Wicklow</p> <p><b>Sheet no.</b> 56</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Leader</p> <p><b>Local M.R.T.</b> Glen of Imaal</p> </div> </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <p>Type of group, number, age and for whom: School, 8 (inc. 1 trainee ML), 14-16yrs, CDVEC</p> <p>Starting grid reference: T112963, Upper car park Glendalough Waterfall, Spink board walk, Glenealo river, Miners track, Upper lake.</p> <p>Ending grid reference: T112963 Upper car park Glendalough</p> <p>Distance travelled: 7.4km Height gained: 390ms Time taken: 5hrs</p> <p>Weather: Cold, low cloud, light NW winds</p> <p>Notable events/Evaluation: Two students turned up with no hats or gloves, used group shelter during lunch. Good choice given visibility. Have spares in the car, in future.</p> <p>Medical Conditions: 2 Asthmatics, 1 diabetic</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <div> <p><b>Date:</b> 19.10.2009</p> <p><b>Area:</b> Donegal</p> <p><b>Sheet no.</b> 3</p> <p><b>Status:</b> Leader</p> <p><b>Local M.R.T.</b> North West M.R.</p> </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <p>Type of group, number, age and for whom: School, 10 (inc. 2 teachers), 13-15yrs, St. Ann's High School</p> <p>Starting grid reference: C450393 Illies Rd, Crackmeennarevog, Slieve Snaght, Slieve Main, Crocknamddy.</p> <p>Ending grid reference: C380350 Kinnagoe</p> <p>Distance travelled: 9.1km Height gained: 610ms Time taken: 5.5hrs</p> <p>Weather: Dry, warm, clear, light SW winds</p> <p>Notable events/Evaluation: Great group, very interested in local history and flora &amp; fauna, as well as the principles of 'Leave no Trace'!</p> <p>Medical Conditions: All fit and well!</p> </div>

**Status:** Leader or Assisting

**N.B** Please attach to the back of this page a photocopied section of the map used and highlight the route taken.

## Mountain Leader Award

### Recommended Reading List

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Mountain Navigation, Cordee Cliff P. (2002)

Mountaineering, A&C Black. A.Richardson 2009

The Handbook of Climbing, Pelham Books Fyffe A & Peter I. (1990)

Outdoor Leadership, The Mountaineers Graham J. (1997)

Managing Risk in Outdoor Activities, NZ Mountain Safety Council  
Haddock C. (1993)

Mountaineering and Leadership, MLTE/MLTS Langmuir E. (revised 2004)

**Hillwalking: The official handbook of the UK Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader schemes**, MLTUK Long S. (2003)

How to Shit in the Woods, Ten Speed Press Mayer K. (1994)

The Adventure Alternative, Cicerone Mortlock C. (1994)

Water Hazards & Water Safety for Hill Walkers, MC of S. (2003) Two Short Videos

Managing and Leading Groups in the Outdoors, IFOL Ogilvie K. (2005)

Mountain Weather, Cicerone Pedgley D. (1994)

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

#### Useful Websites:

Mountaineering Ireland [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

Mountain Leader Training UK [www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)

Mountain Leader Association [www.mlta.co.uk](http://www.mlta.co.uk)

Leave No Trace Ireland [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org)