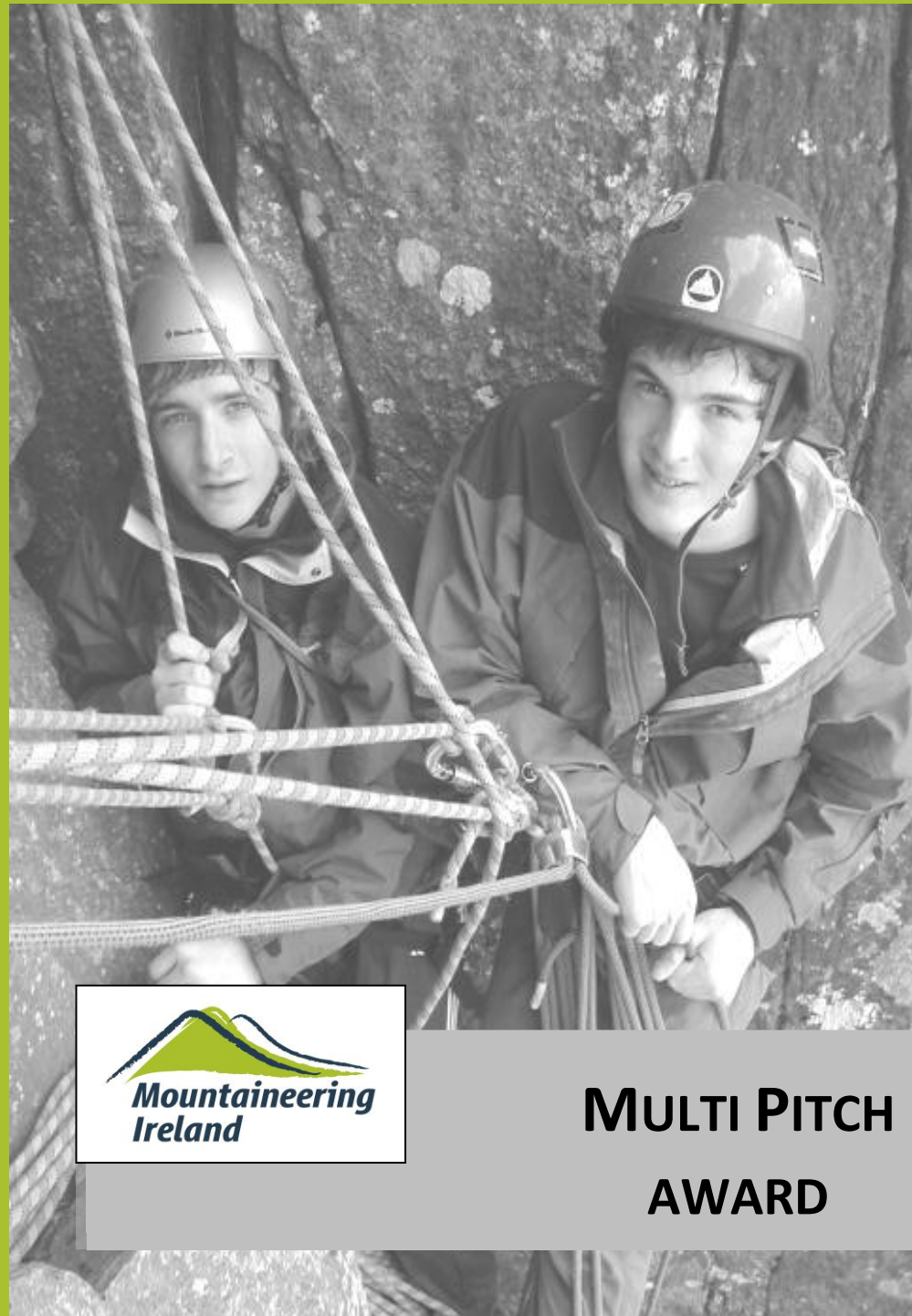




MULTI PITCH AWARD

Preface

The Multi Pitch Award (MPA) scheme provides training and assessment in the skills required to lead climbers on a 'limited remit' of multi pitch climbs. The scope of the award covers personal climbing, stance management, rope systems, client rescue and evacuation, etiquette, environmental responsibilities and more. Candidates will learn how to become an effective multi pitch leader, fostering the spirit of climbing whilst also improving their own climbing skills.

The number of people enjoying rock climbing has risen for many years. Through proper training and assessment of instructors and leaders Mountaineering Ireland is ensuring that high standards of supervision, instruction and leadership are maintained, so that both enjoyment and safety are enhanced without compromising either the sport or the participation of others. High standards are achieved through experience, personal qualities, training and validation.

This Handbook provides advice for anyone involved in taking clients multi pitch rock climbing and particularly for candidates working their way through the MPA scheme. It is designed to support the knowledge and experience of candidates, without prescribing methods. There are many technical manuals developed by climbers, which will continue to illustrate evolving techniques and these notes are designed to complement such literature (see Appendix V).

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1 Prospectus

1.1 Introduction

This scheme has been designed to provide a level of basic competence for those who lead clients on multi pitch climbs. Multi pitch climbing using leader placed protection is one of the most challenging yet rewarding facets of rock climbing. The fact that climbers may not be easily lowered to the ground and the difficulty of escaping the system to retreat, increases the need for clear and manageable ropework and a variety of skills beyond that of an SPA holder.

1.2 Scope of the Scheme

The Multi Pitch Award (MPA) scheme provides training and assessment in the skills required to lead climbers on a 'limited remit' of multi pitch climbs (see below) within Ireland. The scope of the award covers personal climbing, stance management, rope systems, client rescue and evacuation, etiquette, environmental responsibilities and more.

The scheme is for those who lead 'less experienced' climbers on multi pitch climbs. It is primarily concerned with good practice, leading to the safe enjoyment of climbing. Completion of a training course alone, without taking an assessment course, is not a qualification in itself.

For the purposes of this scheme, a multi pitch route is one which:

- *Is climbed with one or more intermediate stances*
- *Is described as a multi pitch route in the guidebook*
- *Is non-tidal*
- *Is non-serious and has little objective danger*
- *Presents no difficulties on approach or retreat, such as route finding, scrambling or navigating*

Outside the scope of the scheme

- *Routes where general mountaineering skills, are needed to approach and return from mountain and moorland cliffs*
- *Routes where in an emergency rescues may involve prussiking or unassisted hoisting*
- *Terrain where the techniques of scrambling and short roping may be required*
- *The teaching of and supervision of leading (these are covered by the Mountain Instructor Award)*
- *Access to tidal sea cliffs, or any location where lowering or abseiling to the ground is not possible*
- *Routes where a rescue may involve prussiking in a free hanging situation or where unassisted hoisting is likely to be required.*
- *The gauging of a candidate's personal qualities. It is the duty of the employer or organising authority to decide whether a leader possesses*

the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for the care of novices in a multi pitch environment. It is the combination of technical skills, wide experience and personal qualities that form the basis for effective leading and instruction. This scheme assesses the technical skills and experience; the employer or organising authority must gauge the personal qualities.

If you are in doubt about the remit or a particular venue then the MI Training Officer, a member of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) or the British Association of Mountain Guides (BMG) who are familiar with the MPA are the appropriate people to approach for advice.

1.3 Stages in the Scheme

Step 1 Join MI or an affiliated mountaineering club

Step 2 Register with BOS and receive a logbook

Step 3 Minimum two-day training course

Step 4 Consolidation

Step 5 Minimum two-day assessment course

Step 6 Continuing experience entered in logbook.

1.4 Registration

Please consider the advice given below. You should note that the figures given are absolute minimums and successful candidates usually had well in excess of the experience outlined below:

Before attending a Training Course you must first register with BOS. This will provide you with a logbook and your personal details will be entered on the national database. You should:

- Be at least 18 years old?*
- Be an individual or club member of the MI?*
- Have a minimum of one year's rock climbing experience post SPA?*
- Be an active climber.*
- Have led at least 15 multi pitch routes at a minimum severe grade and with logged evidence of climbing harder routes where the protection is leader placed?*
- Have been involved as an instructor on a minimum of 10 climbing sessions post SPA*

*Without having done **at least** this amount of leading you are unlikely to play a constructive part on the training course. This experience must be verified on a BOS MPA Registration Form by an SPA/RCL holder or experienced climber.*

1.5 Training courses

Training courses are run by 'BOS approved' course providers and are at least two days long and include evening sessions (20 hours contact time). Training courses run with a minimum of two candidates and a maximum of eight. The maximum trainer/candidate ratio is 1:2.

Larger courses have dual benefits: the varied experience of the candidates enables an individual to have a better chance of seeing how their own skills compare and they also get the opinion of two trainers. Lists of all approved providers are available on www.mountaineering.ie

The training course is for potential multi pitch leaders and assumes competence as a rock climber with experience of leading multi pitch climbs. It will emphasise those skills, which candidates might have difficulty in learning without expert guidance. A few minor aspects of the syllabus may not be covered during the training course and candidates are expected to deal with these items themselves.

The Director of Training will give oral comments to each candidate and will endorse the training course report page of the logbook with comments about the programme, crags and walls used and conditions encountered. Candidates will receive individual recommendations for the consolidation period. The training course does not involve any written reports concerning the performance or standard of candidates.

BOS maintain close links with every provider through reports submitted after each course. If you have concern regarding the quality of instruction received on a MPA course, please discuss this with the course provider of your course. If this does not resolve the issue, please contact BOS with details of your concerns.

1.6 Logbook

Experience gained by candidates should be recorded in the logbook. Entries should be concise, easily read and should include all rock climbing and other relevant experience. The logbook is divided into six sections:

- *Personal details, contents and sample pages*
- *Pre-training experience*
- *Training course report*
- *Logged experience between Training and Assessment*
- *Assessment course report*

Logging post-training experience: The logbook is designed to help you demonstrate your previous experience to others. You should fill it in before a training course to enable the trainers to discuss your particular training needs and to agree which areas of the syllabus you may need to concentrate on before taking an assessment.

Few of us can remember every detail of every climb we have done, but this is no reason to avoid using the logbook. List examples of the variety of

experiences you have gained and give details of the most notable (or exciting) days out. The information you give does not have to be verified by a third party, but will form the basis for discussion at training and assessment. If you have doubt as to the level of your experience the likelihood is that the trainer will also have them.

1.7 Consolidation Period

Candidates will generally see many new ideas and techniques during training and will therefore need some time to practice and evaluate these before taking the MPA assessment. Between training and assessment you must consolidate new ideas and techniques and gain additional climbing experience. Your trainer will advise you about the amount and nature of the personal climbing and instructing/leading experience you should gain. During this period of consolidation, candidates are advised to climb at as wide a range of venues as possible, both as an individual and when assisting the others. BOS recommends that all, but the most experienced candidates allow a minimum of six months between training and assessment. There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the award.

1.8 Assessment

Candidates should not present themselves for Assessment until they have:

- *Registered*
- *Have attended a training course or been granted exemption from training*
- *Have gained further experience (see Experience Pre-Requirements)*
- *Be competently leading Hard Severe grade climbs on outdoor crags with leader-placed protection*
- *Hold a valid First Aid Certificate*
- *Logged an absolute minimum of 20 more multi pitch climbs after training that are outdoors, on leader placement protection. At least half must be of Hard Severe grade and with evidence of harder. The routes should be climbed at a minimum of 3 venues.*
- *Assisted with the supervision of 10 climbing sessions post training, with some of them alongside an experienced MPA, MIA or IFMGA guide at a minimum of two different locations.*

During the assessment course, which is two days long and includes one evening session, candidates will be tested in accordance with the syllabus requirements. The assessment takes 20 hours (often a concentrated weekend) and is run by a BOS approved course provider. Lists of all recognised providers are available from the MI office.

Assessors work on a ratio of 1:2 (or less). The overall course size can range from two candidates to eight. Larger courses have the benefit that each candidate receives the opinion of two assessors.

The Director of Assessment will endorse the logbook in one of three ways:

PASS: Where satisfactory knowledge and application of the syllabus and the necessary experience and attributes were demonstrated.

DEFER: Where the performance was generally up to standard but complete proficiency was not attained in some aspects of the syllabus. Some form of reassessment will be required.

FAIL: Where the performance has been generally weak, or the necessary experience and attributes have not been shown. Further training may be recommended before another complete assessment is taken.

In all cases the result will be discussed with you and recorded in your logbook (the page is inserted by the course provider). Candidates who are deferred or failed will receive specific written feedback, including an action plan. This will include the reasons for the result, recommendations on the additional experience needed and details of the timing and format for subsequent re-assessment.

In considering the decision of the assessors, candidates are asked to listen to all elements of the final interview and wherever possible to raise any concerns at that time.

1.9 Exemption

Climbers who have substantial climbing experience and experience of leading novices on multi pitch climbs may apply to BOS to be exempted from attendance at a training course. There is no exemption from assessment.

Before applying for exemption, candidates should consider the following points:

- *The training course is not a personal skills climbing course. It introduces candidates to the skills necessary for leading novices on pitch rock climbs*
- *It includes material that might be unfamiliar to even experienced climbers*

Candidates applying for exemption should:

- *Be registered with the scheme*
- *Complete a report outlining the case for an exemption*
- *Submit the completed logbook with the report*

There is a small (non-refundable fee) payable on requests for exemption. Details are available from the MI office.

1.10 Equal Opportunities

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

1.11 First Aid

Prior to attendance on an assessment course candidates must 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)

1.12 Candidate appeals procedure

BOS has a candidate appeals procedure that should be carried out in the following order:

- Step 1 BOS encourages dialogue between candidate and course provider. If, on reflection, the discussion and the written report do not fit your impression of the assessment and your performance, then contact the course provider first to establish the reasons for the decision and the subsequent recommendations before reassessment*
- Step 2 If you are not clear then contact the Training Officer of MI for discussion and additional clarification*
- Step 3 Write to BOS with details of your appeal.*
- Step 4 BOS will ask the course provider to respond in writing, supplying any original paperwork. BOS will arbitrate and give its view on the validity of the decision with any additional recommendations for both the provider and the candidate*
- Step 5 The decision of the Chair of BOS, in consultation with members of the Board, is final.*

2 SYLLABUS

The following syllabus is in addition to the SPA syllabus and candidates should be aware that many aspects of the SPA syllabus also applies to multi-pitch climbing situations e.g. fall factors. You will be expected to be familiar with all aspects of the SPA syllabus.

2.1 Equipment

- *Select suitable equipment for multi pitch climbing*
- *Evaluate the condition of equipment and ensure appropriate care and maintenance*

2.2 Creating multi pitch belays

- *Using slings only*
- *Using the rope only*
- *Attach self and others to the belay*

2.3 Belaying

- *Demonstrate direct and indirect belaying*
- *Use a variety of different belay techniques/devices competently and select the most appropriate for a given situation*
- *Understand the risks of clients belaying the MPA holder and how to mitigate them*

2.4 Effective stance management

- *Organising ropes and clients*

2.5 Leading

- *Single and half ropes*
- *Parallel and series rope systems*
- *Arrange appropriate runners and belays to protect a seconding climber*

2.6 Communication

- *Signals*
- *Voice*

2.7 Route choice

- *Interpret guidebooks effectively*
- *Choose 'in-scope' multi pitch climbs for client*

2.8 Solving problems

- *Avoidance*
- *A second having a problem*
- *Hold falls*
- *Stuck climber*
- *Stuck abseiler*
- *Climbing past a runner*

2.9 Emergency procedures

- *The tools of rescues*
- *Descending and ascending techniques*
- *Lowering*
- *Passing a knot during a lower*
- *Escaping the system*
 - *From a sling belay*
 - *From a rope belay*

2.10 Abseiling

- *Joining ropes for a retrievable abseil*
- *Multiple stacked abseils*
- *Abseil with a nervous or injured client*
- *Passing a knot on abseil*
- *Emergency devices for abseiling*

2.11 Personal climbing skills

- *Move with confidence on hard severe multi pitch rock climbs*
- *Place runners suitable for lead protection*

2.12 The multi pitch-climbing Environment

- *Understand the sensitive access and conservation issues of multi pitch climbs*

2.13 Knowledge of climbing

- *Demonstrate a knowledge of the history, traditions and ethics of rock climbing beyond the standard required for SPA*

2.14 Client organisation

- *Be able to clearly brief clients about the issues of multi pitch climbing*
- *Have clear communication skills*
- *Deliver technical instruction to individuals on*
 - *Choice and fitting of harnesses*
 - *Attaching the rope to the harness*
 - *Advice, demonstration and coaching on basic climbing movement*
 - *Belaying*
 - *Safe abseiling*

3 Guidance notes for candidates and trainers

The MPA syllabus does not define a set of techniques; rather it describes a range of skills that candidates should be competent in. Training courses will be run as a series of open discussion workshops taking advantage of the experience of trainees as well as that of trainers.

The MPA syllabus is based on the assumption that candidates are already very experienced at leading multi pitch climbs. It will be expected that candidates will be experienced in selecting anchors, belaying, climbing and abseiling. The emphasis on a training course will therefore be to provide opportunities to share ideas and refine techniques. As far as possible, issues such as problem avoidance and environmental impact will be considered throughout the course rather than as isolated modules

3.1 Equipment

Potential MPA holders should be aware of the range of equipment suitable for use on multi pitch climbs with clients as well as that for personal climbing use. It would be expected that an MPA candidate could offer advice on choice and suitability of equipment, as well as having a good knowledge of its care, maintenance and life expectancy. In addition to being able to offer advice on the selection and use of equipment a candidate should be aware of sources of information, such as current publications and materials produced by the Mountaineering Councils. A training course offers the opportunity for candidates to extend their experience and this particularly applies to the use of equipment. It is expected that the training course will use gear provided by candidates themselves, as well as that of the trainer, to illustrate the appropriate use of different equipment.

3.2 Creating effective belays

Emphasis should be placed on the ability to select sound anchors on multi pitch stances. Trainers should ensure that candidates are aware of the different types of anchors and the characteristics of different rock types, and how this affects the selection of sound anchors. This can be achieved by visiting more than one rock type during a training course, suggesting venues to be visited during a period of consolidation between training and assessment, discussing logbook entries, etc.

3.3 Constructing a belay

The ability to set up a sound system for oneself as well as others should be covered. The method used to construct belays to single and multiple anchors should be reviewed. The trainer should demonstrate alternative systems and emphasise the benefits of being able to adapt different systems to suit different circumstances. Construction of belays using the rope only to link the anchors should be covered, as well as construction of belays created using slings. Although candidates may prefer to always adopt their favoured system, trainers

should illustrate the fact that the climbing medium is not uniform and that to operate safely, different crags and circumstances may well require very different techniques. Trainers should encourage debate regarding the advantages and disadvantages of a range of belay/anchor systems, including environmental impacts and safety issues.

3.4 Direct, Indirect and Semi - Indirect Belaying

The advantages of each should be evaluated during a training course and the appropriate uses of each technique identified.

3.5 Belay devices

A training course should enable candidates to evaluate a range of techniques and devices so that they can choose the most appropriate for a given situation. Trainers should ensure that a variety of devices are available during a course and candidates should be encouraged to experiment with new devices under the guidance of a trainer. The positioning of the device on the belay system relative to the direction of pull, the anchors and the nearby rock should be considered. Factors affecting a Belayer's ability to hold a fall include the type of belay device, the weight of the climber, the slickness of the rope, the gripping strength of the belayer and the runners in the system.

3.6 Teaching a client to belay

One of the factors that makes multi pitch climbing serious for the MPA holder is that inexperienced clients will need to belay the MPA holder at some point. Belay devices, the methods for teaching belaying and advice for limiting a fall should be examined.

3.7 Effective stance management

Candidates should be made aware that stance management is enhanced by:

- *Giving students simple jobs to help organise the stance e.g. recoiling and stacking the rope*
- *Giving students clear and concise instructions as to what order they leave in, and how they should detach from the belay system*

Candidates need to be made aware that students do not always do exactly as they are told. They should, where possible:

- *Make rope systems simple*
- *Provide a back-up which secures the students even if they do not follow instructions*

3.8 Leading

Candidates should be aware of UIAA guidelines for using single and half-ropes.

Candidates should be made aware of the advantages and disadvantages of both parallel and series rope system. While both systems are acceptable

candidates should be made aware that the parallel system may help avoid some potential problems. Regardless of the system chosen the candidate should learn to deal with problems should they arise.

3.9 Arrange appropriate runners to protect a seconding climber

During the training course the placement of runners to protect a leader and second should be looked at again. Depending on the prevailing circumstances this might not take place on graded rock climbs, but on un-graded rock. The placement of runners to protect both of the seconds, as well as the lead climber. Routes that involve substantial horizontal traverses or roofs should be avoided.

The different techniques for ensuring that both climbers are protected when using parallel and series rope techniques should be examined.

3.10 Communication

The communication system should be appropriate to the prevailing conditions and the characteristics of the route/crag. Examine signals and voice commands

3.11 Route choice

Special consideration should be given to:

- *Safety of approach and descent*
- *The party's effect on other users*
- *The availability of suitable stances*
- *The previous experience of the students*

3.12 Solving problems

Candidates should revisit holding falls and locking the belay device. Problems should be approached from the stance of avoidance is best and solution second.

3.13 Emergency procedures

Emergency procedures should be introduced during a training course in a progressive way. Most emergencies relating to clients getting stuck whilst climbing or abseiling can be anticipated or avoided by good route choice. More emphasis should be placed on the good practices that avoid problems than on specific techniques required to solve them once they have occurred. Clear briefing of clients is the first step to prevent a simple fall becoming an epic.

- *Everyone should know what to do if they lose contact with the rock.*
- *Stance should be chosen that allow communication.*
- *Extend runners to reduce friction*
- *Place runners with consideration for the second having to remove them*
- *Place runners to protect the climber seconding*
- *Pitches that end with loose rock put the second at greater risk.*

- *Maintain your climbing and rescue equipment in good condition.*
- *Keep the rope(s) tidy.*
- *Create a simple belay.*
- *Belay diligently.*
- *Remove jewellery.*
- *Have first aid training.*

Ask If it can happen, it will happen - ask yourself, what If?

Opportunities to discuss and demonstrate good practice in choice of venue, choice of route, briefing clients, placing protection etc. should be integrated throughout the training course.

The cliff environment is always changing and the belays are never the same, so following ABC like a fire drill, will not always work. The scenarios and solutions examined should be seen as examples of the tools rather than the only way to solve a problem. These techniques are seldom used and regular practice is important to maintain efficiency. For simplicity, all the rescues should be looked at using a single rope; double ropes make it easier but they are a lot thinner. A knife should not be necessary, but tangles can happen and a knife should be carried, even if it is only for cutting slings to use as abseil tat.

Following the below structure can make the teaching of rescues simpler.

- *Emphasise that simple belays using slings can make rescuing someone easier*
- *Look at the tools such prussiks, protecting an abseil, prussiking and using mechanical devices*
- *Solving problems without leaving the belay*
 - *Counterbalance hoist*
- *Lowering - evacuation from a multi pitch crag may be more straightforward, if it can be done without taking an interim stance. Passing the knot through a friction device is an important part of this technique.*
- *Passing a knot during a lower*
- *Escaping the system- This is extremely serious in a multi pitch situation and candidates should appreciate that this should only be considered as a last resort to enable abseiling off, administering first aid etc. The method of escape required will depend on the original belay method adopted by the leader. The simplest escape will be when the leader has used a sling arrangement to connect the anchor points and has connected the friction device directly to this. Escape is simply achieved by untying from the rope after locking off the device. The most complex system is where the leader has tied into the anchors using the climbing rope and is belaying indirectly with the friction device attached to his/her harness. Candidates will be trained in both methods and will be free on assessment to use whichever method is appropriate to the belay system they choose to use. Because of the seriousness of being out of the system in a multi pitch situation candidates should only be trained or assessed escaping the system when at the top of the crag.*

3.14 Abseiling

Candidates should set up retrievable abseils using a variety of methods to join the ropes, with the rope attached to suitable anchors. The advantages of each method of attachment in different situations should be evaluated. Repeated abseils is not part of the syllabus for this award. It is expected the clients can always be lowered to the ground even if that requires joining two ropes together.

Passing a knot when abseiling - In an emergency situation, leaders must be able to abseil past a knot. The sequence for this is similar to that for extended lowers, but trainers should emphasise how, in this case, it is easier to have the self-protection system above the abseil device and attached to the main body of the harness, not the leg loop.

3.15 Personal climbing skills

The ability to read a guide book is fundamental to avoiding epics. A well selected route should be appropriate to the skills and ability of the group members and therefore problems such as over-anxiety or jammed limbs should not occur. Equally important is consideration of the safety of a route, taking into account such factors as the likelihood of swinging falls or the position of difficult moves in relation to ledges. If the hardest moves are directly off the ground or from a ledge then it would be difficult to prevent a falling climber from making contact with the ground/ledge. In addition to route identification details, important access and environmental notes are contained within most guides. If this is out of date, other sources of information should be used.

The MPA is an all-Ireland award and candidates are reminded that by the time they are ready for assessment they should feel confident about climbing on unfamiliar multi pitch cliffs. Guidebooks are produced by a variety of different organisations in different areas of Ireland and candidates are expected to be familiar with more than just those books that cover their own locality. Misinterpretation of a guidebook leading to incorrect route choice can result in difficulties, so the importance of this seemingly simple element of the syllabus cannot be overstated.

3.16 Leading climbs

The ability to climb confidently at hard severe grade is required prior to assessment and trainers should ensure that candidates are fully aware of the additional climbing experience they need to gain between training and assessment.

Candidates at training should not feel under pressure to climb at any particular grade, other than that at which they feel comfortable. It is more important that they have experience of leading climbs than an ability to climb harder routes.

3.17 Safety chains and fall factors

The principle of keeping the number of links in a belay system to the minimum should be reiterated. The advantage of minimising unnecessary links in a system (such as single karabiners in place of quick-draws or use of the rope alone, in place of slings and karabiners) should be discussed. The use of screw gate karabiners and open gate karabiners on belays should be openly discussed.

Fall factors in theory predict the impact force of a fall. In reality this also depends on the frictional properties of karabiners and ropes, as well as the distance fallen, relative to the length of rope in use. A full knowledge of these complex calculations is not necessary, but the principles involved are important and at least a discussion of this topic should be included during a training course.

3.18 The multi pitch-climbing Environment

Time should be taken to discuss the unique issues created by multi pitch climbs that often venture into areas where rare plants and wildlife are found.

3.19 Knowledge of climbing

An extended knowledge and experience of climbing is fundamental to the MPA scheme.

History and Ethics: Climbing is not defined by a set of rules, but by an unwritten code of conduct that is the result of the actions of climbers themselves. Although the code of conduct is based on the history and traditions of climbing it is also continually changing as techniques, equipment and aspirations evolve. An MPA holder contributes to this process of development by introducing novices to the sport and so every effort should be made to ensure that this is done in a sensitive and understanding manner. Candidates are therefore expected to have a good knowledge of current issues through an active personal involvement in climbing and by reading the climbing press.

3.20 Clubs and Mountaineering Ireland

Climbing clubs provide effective means of participating in the sport. SPA award holders are expected to be able to advise a newcomer on how to contact local clubs and to explain some of the associated benefits. The MI is not a governing body that imposes rules, but a representative body that acts on behalf of, and promotes the interests of climbers and walkers. At the point of registration on the SPA scheme, candidates must be current members of the MI.

4 Guidance notes for Assessors

The following notes are for assessors. They should be read in conjunction with Appendix V and any additional notes issued by BOS.

4.1 Log Book

Assessors should use the logbook to evaluate the experience of a candidate. Experience cannot be measured simply in terms of the length of time a candidate has been climbing.

When possible assessors should ensure that candidates are not trained and assessed in the same venue, especially if the majority of the candidate's experience has been gained at that same venue.

All candidates should have experience on a minimum of three different crags and rock types. This is of particular importance if candidates are trained and assessed in the same venue.

In addition to this independent personal climbing experience a potential award holder should gain experience assisting alongside an experienced MPA holder or higher award at, at least, least two different crags. This should comprise approximately 10 sessions.

4.2 Equipment

A candidate is expected to provide sufficient equipment for the assessment and be aware of its appropriate use. Assessors may choose to provide a range of equipment for candidates to use in addition to that which they bring themselves. It is usual for an assessment course to contain an element of training and assessors may create an opportunity to extend as well as to assess the knowledge of candidates in relation to suitable equipment for group use.

4.3 Anchors

Assessors should select venues to provide a wide range of choice of anchor. Candidates are expected to exercise sound judgement whatever the rock type encountered.

4.4 Belaying

In the first place assessors will often choose to assess this aspect of climbing by observing the candidate rock climbing with a peer. Commonly the candidate will be given a free choice of routes on which to demonstrate competence.

4.5 Abseiling

Assessors may assess abseiling as a personal skill during a course.

4.6 Route choice

Route selection with the use of the guidebook or by a visual assessment of the rock can be revealing as to the experience of the candidate. Assessors should be cautious, however, about expecting quick and accurate route selection at a venue familiar to themselves, but new to the candidates. Candidates will usually have the opportunity to select and climb a route in consultation with their assessor. Exceptionally, an assessor may choose to select a specific route for a candidate to climb in order to assess certain aspects of the syllabus.

4.7 Leading Hard Severe grade climb

The ability of the award holder to lead climbs and place suitable runners is a fundamental requirement of the scheme.

Leading a rock climb is fundamental to the safe supervision of clients on multi pitch climbs. A candidate should have the ability to lead Hard Severe grade climbs, which will be recorded in the logbook. During an assessment it is usual to demonstrate this competence on severe grade climbs with leader-placed protection. The candidate should be expected to move fluidly and rapidly on severe grade climbs. In exceptional circumstances (such as extremes of weather) and where the candidate is particularly experienced, this requirement may be modified.

4.8 Safety chains and fall factors

An understanding of why a fall factor 2 should be avoided and how to avoid it is fundamental at this level. It is usual for this to be evaluated during the practical elements of a course and to be extended through questioning and/or some form of written or discussion paper.

4.9 The climbing environment

It is possible that candidates who operate in a way that damages the environment or, jeopardises access would fail the course even if the technical aspects of their performance were satisfactory.

Once an assessor is satisfied that the candidate has empathy with the climbing environment it is common for these elements of the syllabus to be further trained during an assessment course.

Competent candidates should familiarise themselves with local access issues even if they are undertaking an assessment in an unfamiliar area.

The actions of a candidate in relation to conservation whilst at a climbing site should be observed and, where appropriate, discussed. The impact of climbers will be clearly visible at most popular sites and strategies to minimise this should be debated.

Climbing ethics exist in the form of unwritten codes of conduct with distinct variations from area to area. An assessor would expect a candidate to be sensitive to and aware of both locally and nationally important issues currently being debated in the climbing press. The experience recorded in the logbook is likely to be a good indicator of the depth of knowledge of topical climbing issues. Assessors must ensure that candidates are sufficiently informed and able to operate in accordance with local ethics (often this may be evaluated through questioning rather than observation).

Assessors must be confident that candidates operate in a suitably sensitive way so as to avoid conflict between their climb and the interests of other climbers.

Sustainable climbing depends on sensitive and sympathetic use of the crag environment. Although assessment of the practical skills is easier than evaluation of the attitudes and actions of candidates relating to the environment, this should carry equal weighting to the practical aspects. A variety of techniques exist for an assessor to evaluate the sensitivity with which a candidate regards the crag environment - such as discussion topics, written papers, scrutiny of the logbook, observation during all stages of the practical course and direct questioning as issues present themselves.

4.10 Client management

The importance of route selection should not be overlooked during an assessment, where the focus can often be on techniques in isolation, rather than on an holistic approach. Candidates should be given the opportunity to select routes and venues used during a course. Providing real choices in the selection of routes, rather than directing candidates to specific climbs, will assist in the assessment of the awareness of problem avoidance.

4.11 Problems and emergency techniques

Problem avoidance is a theme that is best dealt with as issues arise throughout the course, rather than as a session in isolation. Route choice follows choice of crag and choice of approach in the sequence of decisions that contribute to a well-structured climbing experience. As far as possible candidates should be given the opportunity to contribute to these decisions during an assessment.

Most assessors will choose to integrate emergency procedures throughout the course rather than dealing with them as a set of skills in isolation. Because multi pitch climbs within the scope of the award have easy access to top and bottom, most solutions to problems may be solved by simply lowering the climber to the ground.

By providing real choice and getting candidates to justify their decisions, an assessor should be able to evaluate whether a candidate has the experience to foresee (and therefore avoid) likely problems. Where a candidate does not have the experience to foresee problems, it would be reasonable to set a testing scenario that requires appropriate skills to resolve. Equally, where an assessor has every confidence that a candidate has the experience and approach to

foresee and avoid problems, it may be that they are not set a specific problem to solve.

5 Appendices

5.1 Sample Theory Paper

Written papers of some form may be given before or during the course. These should be considered as diagnostic tests designed to illustrate strengths and identify any gaps in knowledge. Results will not be taken in isolation. Rather, they will prompt the assessor into asking further questions and selecting appropriate tasks to be set in the latter part of the course. Written papers are likely to focus on areas of the syllabus, which include the crag environment and knowledge of the sport.

MPA Assessment - Written Paper

1 Describe some of the factors which could lead to access being denied at a climbing venue.

2 What sources of information are there regarding access to climbing venues?

3 List points you would consider when trying to limit your impact at a popular crag.

4 Who first climbed the following routes?:

6 What is a direct belay

7 What is a Reverso? List its advantages and disadvantages

8 How would you assess the life expectancy of a climbing rope?

9 Which body is currently responsible for setting international minimum safety standards for climbing equipment?

11 What type of rock is found at:

12 What would you recommend as one of the most important methods of injury avoidance when climbing or training?

14 List three of the main interests of MI.

5.2 Sample Programmes

Training

Evening 1 (or pre-course)

- *Course introduction, paperwork*
- *Review of personal climbing experience*

Day 1 Meet at Crag A

Day 2 Meet at Crag B

- *Course review - Logbooks & personal action plans*

Assessment

Pre-course Send in logbooks

- *Receive home paper & discussion topic (optional)*

- Evening 1
- Course introduction, complete paperwork

Day 1 Crag A

- Guidebooks & route choice
- Runner placements, belay construction & leading climbs
- Personal abseiling

Evening 2

- Home paper discussion & topics presented

Day 2 Meet at Crag B

- Course review & results

Note: assessments do not generally involve groups of novices.

5.3 Mountain Training Boards

MI & BOS

Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) is the Irish Mountain Training Board and is a sub-committee of Mountaineering Ireland. Information on BOS and the MI can be obtained from;

Tel: 00353 1 6251117 Fax: 00353 1 6251116

Email: training@mountaineering.ie Website address: www.mountaineering.ie

Mountain Training UK

MTUK, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Gwynedd LL24 0ET

Tel: 00441690 720272 Fax: 00441690 720248

Email: theukmtb@aol.com Website address: www.ukmtb.org

Mountain Training Northern Ireland

MTNI, Tollymore Mountain Centre, Bryansford, Newcastle, Co Down BT33 0PT

Tel: 04843 722158 Fax: 04843 726155

Email: admin@tollymoremc.com

Website address: www.tollymoremc.com

5.4 Bibliography

The following publications are relevant to several areas of the syllabus:

- *Mountaineering Essential Skills* Alun Richardson 2009
- *Rucksack guide to Rock Climbing* Alun Richardson 2009
- *Rock Climbing for Instructors* Alun Richardson 2001
- *Mountain Skills Training Handbook*, P Hill and S Johnson 2000
- *The Handbook of Climbing*, A Fyffe & I Peter. Pelham Books, 1997
- *A Manual of Modern Rope Techniques*, N Shepherd. Constable, 1998
- *Irish Mountain Log* magazine
- *Walking World Ireland* magazine- access section
- *High, Climber and On The Edge* magazines
- *Close Calls*, J Long Falcon 1999

- *Knots Booklet*, BMC
- *Further Modern Rope Techniques*, N Shepherd. Constable, 1998
- *Performance Rock Climbing*, D Goddard & V Neumann. Stockpole Books, 1993
- *Ropes Booklet*, BMC *Training for Rock Climbing*, S Bollen. Penguin Books, 1994
- *Climbing Rock, Classic Climbs, Essential Skills*, BMC, 1999

The Climbing Environment

- *Climbing Guidebooks*, access and environmental sections, MCI, BMC, CC, FRCC, SMC
- *Climbing Anthologies* e.g. *Classic Rock*, K Wilson. Granada, 1981
- *The Climbers* C Bonnington Hodder & Stoughton 1994
- *The Games Climbers Play*, K Wilson. Baton Wicks, 1978
- *Reading the Irish Landscape*, F Mitchell & M Ryan, Town and Country House 1997
- *Mountaineering & Leadership*, Access & Conservation section, E Langmuir. MLTB/ SSC, 1995
- *Mountaineering First Aid*, P Thurman, The Mountaineers 1996
- *Medical Handbook for Mountaineers*, Steele. Constable, 1988

Multi Pitch Award

Skills Checklist

The following syllabus is in addition to the SPA syllabus and candidates should be aware that many aspects of the SPA syllabus also applies to multi-pitch climbing situations e.g. fall factors. You will be expected to be familiar with all aspects of the SPA syllabus.

Syllabus Area	Can I do this?	Notes
2.1 Equipment •Select suitable equipment for multi pitch climbing •Evaluate the condition of equipment and ensure appropriate care and maintenance		
2.2 Creating multi pitch belays •Using slings only •Using the rope only •Attach self and others to the belay		

Skills Checklist 2

Syllabus Area	Can I do this?	Notes
2.3 Belaying • <i>Demonstrate direct and indirect belaying</i> • <i>Use a variety of different belay techniques/devices competently and select the most appropriate for a given situation</i> • <i>Understand the risks of clients belaying the MPA holder and how to mitigate them</i>		
2.4 Effective stance management • <i>Organising ropes and clients</i>		
2.5 Leading • <i>Single and half ropes</i> • <i>Parallel and series rope systems</i> • <i>Arrange appropriate runners and belays to protect a seconding climber</i>		

Skills Checklist 3

Syllabus Area	Can I do this?	Notes
2.6 Communication • <i>Signals</i> • <i>Voice</i>		
2.7 Route choice • <i>Interpret guidebooks effectively</i> • <i>Choose 'in-scope' multi pitch climbs for client</i>		
2.8 Solving problems • <i>Avoidance</i> • <i>A second having a problem</i> • <i>Hold falls</i> • <i>Stuck climber</i> • <i>Stuck abseiler</i> • <i>Climbing past a runner</i>		

Skills Checklist 4

Syllabus Area	Can I do this?	Notes
2.9 Emergency procedures • <i>The tools of rescues</i> • <i>Descending and ascending techniques</i> • <i>Lowering</i> • <i>Passing a knot during a lower</i> • <i>Escaping the system</i> - o <i>From a sling belay</i> - o <i>From a rope belay</i>		
2.10 Abseiling • <i>Joining ropes for a retrievable abseil</i> • <i>Multiple stacked abseils</i> • <i>Abseil with a nervous or injured client</i> • <i>Passing a knot on abseil</i> • <i>Emergency devices for abseiling</i> 2.11 Personal climbing skills • <i>Move with confidence on hard severe multi pitch rock climbs</i> • <i>Place runners suitable for lead protection</i>		

Skills Checklist 5

Syllabus Area	Can I do this?	Notes
2.12 The multi pitch-climbing Environment •Understand the sensitive access and conservation issues of multi pitch climbs 2.13 Knowledge of climbing •Demonstrate a knowledge of the history, traditions and ethics of rock climbing beyond the standard required for SPA		

Skills Checklist 6

2.14 Client organisation

•Be able to clearly brief clients about the issues of multi pitch climbing

•Have clear communication skills

•Deliver technical instruction to individuals on

- Choice and fitting of harnesses
- Attaching the rope to the harness
- Advice, demonstration and coaching on basic climbing movement
- Belaying
- Safe abseiling

Syllabus Area	Can I do this?	Notes
<i>Client Organisation CONTINUED</i> <i>demonstrate an understanding of warming up and injury avoidance techniques</i> <i>demonstrate an understanding of the needs of those with physical and mental disabilities and medical conditions</i> <i>demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland.</i>		

*How many multi-pitch routes have you led outdoors on leader placed protection?
(at least 20 required, minimum of 10 at HS)*

☐

*How many different venues have you climbed at?
(Three or more required)*

☐

*Have you assisted with the supervision of 10 climbing sessions, post training, alongside an experienced MPA, MIA or IFMGA guide?
(Minimum of 2 different venues required)*

☐

Do you have a valid First Aid Qualification?

☐