



Hill and Moorland Leader Award Skills Checklist

Introduction

This skills checklist is designed to enable you, as a Hill and Moorland Leader Award (HML) candidate, to both record what you have covered as your training progresses e.g. as a technical diary and, at the close of your course, reflect on the syllabus topics covered during your training, allowing you to rate yourself using the 'Learning Stage' described below.

It is hoped that this process will then assist you in completing your Action Plan (which you can share and discuss with your course director at your end of course debrief) which will guide you in consolidating and developing your experience and skills post training and pre-assessment.

When reflecting you might find it useful to refer back to the Hill and Moorland Leader Candidate Handbook. In addition the MTUK publication – "Hill Walking" – details many of the techniques that might be used by a Hill and Moorland Leader and will be useful for refreshing your memory of specific techniques or skills covered at training.

How to appraise yourself

The syllabus is broken down into headings. Against each competency you can give yourself a 'learning stage' number – each number 1-3 corresponds with a description as detailed below. Learning stage 3 would very broadly equate with the degree of competency you'd expect from a qualified and experienced Hill and Moorland Leader.

Learning stage descriptions

Cognitive or understanding phase (Learning stage 1)

In the first stage of learning performances are inconsistent and success is not guaranteed. Performing the skill requires all of the candidate's attention and so they rely on the trainer for cues. This is a process of trial and error. Correct performances must be reinforced through external feedback.

Associative or verbal motor phase (Learning stage 2)

Performances are becoming more consistent as knowledge and skills are being formed. While the simpler parts of the performance now look fluent and are well learned, the more complex elements require most of the candidate's spare attention. The candidate is starting to get a sense of internal 'kinaesthetic' and 'cognitive' feedback when they perform or apply a skill well. They are starting to detect and correct their own errors.

Autonomous or motor phase (Learning stage 3)

In the final stage of learning, performances have become consistent, fluid and 'unconsciously competent'. The knowledge and skills involved are well learned and stored in the long-term memory. There is now spare attention which can be focused on group members and adapting appropriate leadership approaches and techniques as applied to situations. To retain the new skill at this level, it must be regularly practiced to reinforce the motor and cognitive programmes.

A leader of walking groups needs a wide range of skills and knowledge in order to operate effectively. Not only is it necessary to be able to perform each element in isolation but it is also vital that leaders can combine several skills at any one time. They may need to manage the group and navigate simultaneously for example.

1 Walking and route finding

	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
It is essential that group leaders are competent walkers who possess the skills to do the following:		
a. demonstrate good practice with regard to individual skills: pace, conservation of energy, balance and co-ordination		
b. identify hazards and manage risk		
c. make good route choices with alterations appropriate to conditions		
d. interpret maps and evaluate terrain		

2 Navigation

	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. use of relevant maps and an understanding of their scales, conventional signs, grid references, contours and other methods of showing relief		
b. identification of topographical features, relating the map to the ground and vice versa		
c. measurement of distance on the map and the ground		
d. identification of position by various methods of relocation		
e. navigation across country by various methods in poor visibility and/or in darkness. This will include the use of a compass, the use of a map alone and an awareness of other navigational aids such as an altimeter or GPS		
f. route planning		

3 Hazards and emergency procedures

The ability to make sound judgements and to deal with a wide range of hazards when leading groups is an essential skill. This includes:	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. recognition and avoidance of steep and broken ground		
b. recognition of water hazards, including marshes and streams, and the skills and safety procedures for dealing with them		
c. procedures in the event of an accident and how to bivouac in an emergency		
d. understanding the causes, symptoms, prevention and treatment in the field of hypothermia, cold injuries and heat disorders in addition to the general first aid requirements of the scheme		

4 Equipment

The equipment used by a group can have a critical impact on the success of any journey. Group leaders should have knowledge of the following:	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. personal walking equipment		
b. additional equipment required by a leader		
c. packing and carrying personal and communal equipment		

5 Responsibilities of the leader

Candidates must be conversant with the main areas of responsibility of the group leader, particularly for the care and safety of the group, as follows:	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. general responsibilities to the group and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians, the organising authority, committee or manager of the activity, the outdoor user and the general public		
b. specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity		
c. current legislation and the legal responsibilities that relate to Hill and Moorland Leaders, including issues specific to supervising young people and vulnerable adults		

6 Group management		
Candidates should be:	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. familiar with techniques that may be required to manage a group effectively whilst meeting the needs of the group and its individual members.		
b. able to provide a safe and rewarding experience for each group member and be able to evaluate the experience as a means to developing personal performance and motivating individuals towards further participation where appropriate.		
c. familiar with a range of leadership styles and be able to select and use those appropriate to the group and the context.		
7 Access, conservation & environmental knowledge		
Candidates should understand and be familiar with the following:	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. applicable national codes (such as the Country Code), other associated codes and the responsibility of the leader to minimise impact on the environment		
b. current applicable legislation concerning access to open land including the law relating to rights of way and access to land and the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use		
c. how and where to get information about access to upland areas e.g. from appropriate guidebooks and maps, Mountaineering Council sources, local and National Access Forums and from the various countryside agencies		
d. the multiple uses of upland areas e.g. hill farming, forestry, water collection, grouse shooting, stalking and outdoor recreation		
e. issues relating to upland conservation and the long-term effects of human pressures on this environment		

8 Weather

Candidates must have a basic knowledge of the weather as it affects upland areas. They must gain practical experience in relating regional weather forecasts to hill and moorland areas and develop their ability to make short-term forecasts from observed weather conditions.

Candidates should have an understanding of:	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. sources of information on weather		
b. effects of weather on route selection and level of activity		
c. simple interpretation of weather maps		

9 Background knowledge

Candidates should have a basic understanding of	LEARNING STAGE	NOTES
a. the development of hill walking in the UK and Ireland		
b. the role of the Mountaineering Councils, Mountain Training and associated bodies		
c. the diversity of mountaineering and hill-walking literature including books, guidebooks, websites and magazines and how to access relevant information from them		



Hill and Moorland Leader ACTION PLAN

What is the timescale for doing your assessment?	
How many Summer Quality Days (QD) – that meet ALL of the QD criteria in the HML handbook – have you logged?	
List three syllabus areas that you feel/think particularly confident or practised in.	
List three syllabus areas that you feel/think require further practice.	
What opportunities can you foresee for gaining experience to develop your Hill and Moorland Leader skillset?	
Given your answers to the above briefly outline your way forward for becoming a Hill and Moorland Leader.	

Appendix

Assessment requirements

Prior to assessment all candidates must have completed an absolute minimum of 40 logged walks in at least three different upland areas. Duplicated walks (i.e. walks along the same route in similar conditions) must not be counted in this total. Experience gained in other mountain activities is useful, but not a pre-requisite. Some non-UK/Ireland experience may be included, but should be in terrain and conditions that are similar to those in the UK/Ireland and must be unguided. Normally any overseas days would be considered as additional experience and should not form a substantial part of the required total.

Complete an appropriate first aid course.

Terrain definition for Hill and Moorland Leader

The Hill and Moorland Leader scheme offers the opportunity to gain experience and demonstrate technical competence in leading groups on hill walks in areas of the UK and Ireland that fall within the technical definition outlined below. Such areas may often be subject to hostile weather conditions and require an element of self-sufficiency and this is reflected in the syllabus of this scheme.

Suitable terrain for the Hill and Moorland Leader will meet the following four criteria:

- open, uncultivated, non-mountainous high or remote country known variously as upland, moor, bog, fell, hill or down
- areas enclosed by well-defined geographical or man-made boundaries such as classified roads (areas that merge with mountain regions and do not have well defined boundaries are excluded)
- areas of remoteness that are easily exited in a few hours, returning to a refuge or an accessible road
- areas where movement on steep or rocky terrain is not required (in either a planned or unplanned situation)

Quality Day

Experience gained in areas other than the UK and Ireland can be recorded if undertaken in similar conditions to those found in the UK.

The majority of this experience however, at least 50% of the minimum requirement, should be in the UK.

A Quality Day will involve most, if not all, of the factors below:

- The individual takes part in the planning and leadership.
- Navigation skills are required.
- Knowledge is increased and skills practised.
- Attention is paid to safety.
- Adverse weather and poor underfoot conditions may be encountered.
- Four hours or more journey time.

These criteria mean that days as a course member under instruction, a member of a group practising skills, or days spent repeating familiar routes are very unlikely to meet the requirements of a Quality Day. However these can be recorded in the appropriate place in your logbook even though they are not suitable for use in meeting the minimum requirements for attending assessment.