



**LOWLAND
LEADER** 
CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

CONNECT WITH US



PREFACE

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

Mountain Training recognises that walking, climbing, and mountaineering are activities that have associated risks. Mountain Training provides training and assessment courses and guidance to help leaders develop the skills to manage the risks associated with the environment in which they operate and to enable new participants to have positive experiences.

All leaders owe a heightened duty of care to the people they lead, their colleagues, and the wider public who may be impacted by the leader's actions.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Thanks also to the following whose photographs bring the handbook to life: Emily Ward Photography, George McEwan, Jon Garside, Nicola Jasieniecka-Evans, Passionfruit Pictures and Plas y Brenin.



Published by Mountain Training, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ES
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Design by Dragon Design: www.dragondesignwales.com

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1. SCHEME PATHWAY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Lowland Leader scheme enables walkers experienced on low-level terrain to lead groups on day walks in the countryside and woodland of the United Kingdom and Ireland, in summer conditions.

1.2. SCOPE OF THE SCHEME

A qualified Lowland Leader can lead others on day walks in low-level countryside and woodland environments. Qualification holders are able to manage groups safely during this activity.

TERRAIN

Low level countryside and woodland in the UK and Ireland meeting the following criteria;

- Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground and that do not require navigation across untracked areas.
- Throughout the walk the group should generally be no more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area.
- Walks must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.
- Any potential escape routes should also lie within the scope of the defined terrain for the Lowland Leader qualification.

EXCLUSIONS

The scheme does not cover;

- Walks which cross open countryside where paths or tracks are not clearly visible.
- Walks which cross any hazardous terrain (e.g. cliffs, very steep slopes, water hazards etc.).
- Walks undertaken in winter conditions. This scheme does not provide training or assessment of the skills required to cope with the hazards of winter conditions, particularly lying snow and ice. 'Summer conditions' are defined by the conditions prevailing and not by the calendar.

1.3. STAGES IN THE SCHEME

1.3.1. Registration prerequisites:

- You must be at least 17 years old.
- You must have a genuine interest in low level walking and the supervision of groups.

1.3.2. Training prerequisites:

- You must be registered on the scheme.
- You must have either;
- An up-to-date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of 10 varied walks in low level terrain.
Or
- Have attended a walking and navigation personal skills training course recognised by Mountain Training.

1.3.3. Consolidation period:

- During the period between training and assessment, candidates are expected to gain personal experience walking in low level areas. Every opportunity should be taken to practise the skills learned during training.
- All but the most experienced candidates should allow a minimum of six months between training and assessment.
- There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the qualification.

1.3.4. Assessment prerequisites:

- You must have attended a Lowland Leader training course (or have been granted exemption)
- You must be familiar with the syllabus
- You must have an up to date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of;
 - 20 varied low level walks in the UK and Ireland. This is a minimum requirement. Other personal walking and leadership experience is useful but not essential.
 - You must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least two full days or sixteen hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.

2. COURSE STRUCTURE

TRAINING

- Training will involve a minimum of 16 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 2 days.
- Results: Completed, Not yet completed, Withdrew, Did not show, Exemption.

ASSESSMENT

- Assessment will involve a minimum of 16 hours contact time delivered over a minimum of 2 days.
- Results: Pass, Defer, Fail, Not yet completed, Withdrew, Did not show.
- There is no exemption from any element of the assessment. Practical reassessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment to allow sufficient time for practice and preparation. All deferral reassessments must be completed within five years of the original assessment. Candidates may undertake two short reassessments after a defer result. Subsequently a full assessment must be undertaken.

3. COURSE DELIVERY

TRAINING

- Course director must hold the Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Additional staff must hold the Lowland Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Min. course size: 2, Max. course size: 12, Max. ratio: 1:6.

ASSESSMENT

- Course director must hold the Mountain Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Additional staff must hold the Lowland Leader (or higher) plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.
- Min. course size: 2, Max. course size: 12, Max. ratio: 1:4.

4. AWARDING ORGANISATIONS

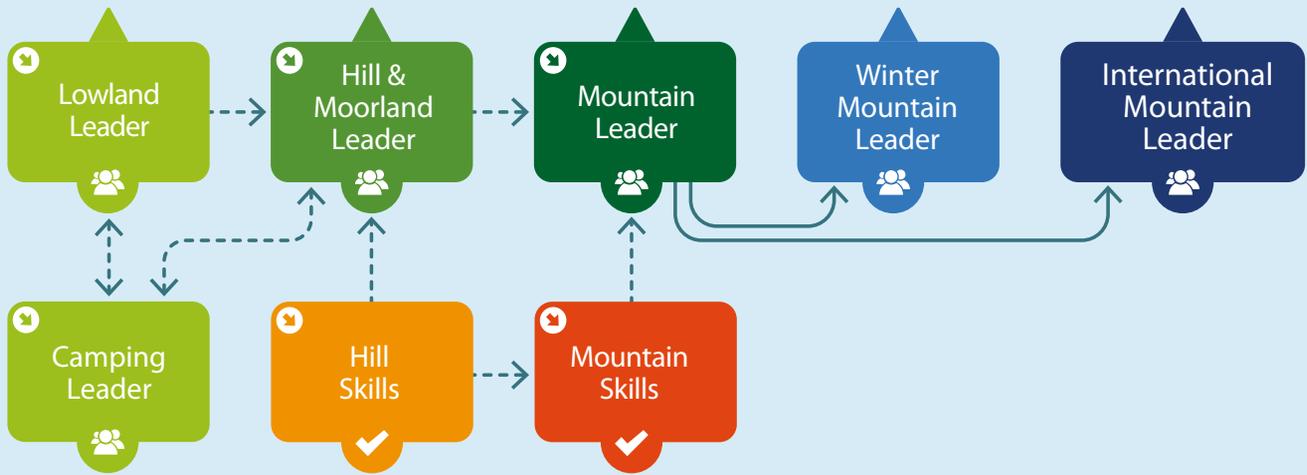
- Mountain Training England
- Mountain Training Scotland
- Mountain Training Cymru
- Mountain Training Board Ireland



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



Walking Pathway



- Direct Entry
- Leadership Qualifications
- Skills Courses
- Recommended Progression



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

SYLLABUS

1. LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

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

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

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

Many of your responsibilities as a leader will be identified through preparation and planning and will likely include: parental consent (if participants are under 18), authority clearance (if required), personal and medical information, finances, insurance and appropriate transport.

Employing/deploying organisations such as schools, Scouts, Girlguiding and local education authorities will have their own procedures in place to ensure that appropriate preparation has been

undertaken. Your understanding of and ability to adapt to these procedures and underlying principles will enable you to independently prepare appropriate walking trips.

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

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



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

- Develop good planning habits by thoroughly planning a few of your own journeys.
- When you go walking yourself, try to imagine the walk 'through the eyes' of a variety of groups. Where are the challenges? Where can you take breaks? Where can you introduce extra interest?
- Try and get out as much as you can with experienced leaders and note any techniques and strategies they use with their group.
- Research opportunities for developing skills or finding walking companions that might be suitable for a range of groups and individuals.



 SYLLABUS

2. LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHALLENGE - The leader provides relevant and appropriately challenging experiences.

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

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

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

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

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

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

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

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

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

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

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

Underpinning the role of a leader are the values, beliefs, and ethos that shape every

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

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

1. **I**nspire and motivate your followers with a unified vision.
2. **N**urture an environment of team-focused goals
3. **S**et the example you want to see in your followers.
4. **P**raise, and give constructive feedback to help your followers develop.
5. **I**nsist on setting high standards, relative to each individual.
6. **R**ecognise and respond to each individual's needs.
7. **E**ncourage followers to create and implement their own solutions.

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



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

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



SYLLABUS

3. PLANNING AND WEATHER

PRIOR PLANNING

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

WEATHER

- 3.5.** Interpret and use reliable sources of weather information.
- 3.6.** Recognise and continuously evaluate the effect of weather on route selection, equipment choice and activity.

GUIDANCE NOTES

The ability to plan a lowland walk is an essential skill for a Lowland Leader and is linked to their knowledge of the group as well as an understanding of weather forecasts and how weather influences walking conditions. Many organisations will require a formal record of the planned trip and different ways of recording and communicating the plan (e.g. route card, annotated map) should be practised. A well considered plan is useful for acknowledging any alternative routes and identifying the key places along the route where decisions will need to be made.

A suitable plan will also accommodate the needs of specific groups or individuals which may influence the route choice. Measurable factors such as distance, time and gradient will be considered as well as hazards or features such as uneven ground, stiles, road crossings and barbed wire fences.

It is impossible to make any walk free from hazard or risk and it is the way in which those risks are managed that is the hallmark of a competent leader. Many organisations have standard procedures for leaders to

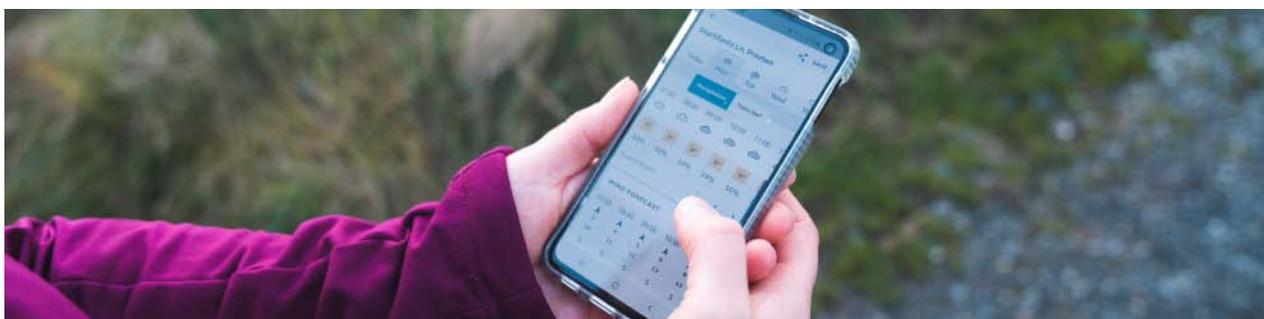
follow with regards to risk assessments and it is vital that the risk assessment is not simply a file 'back at base' but that there is ongoing, 'dynamic' risk assessment being undertaken throughout the walk. Are those stepping stones still safe to cross after that downpour an hour or two ago? What livestock is in the next field you are planning to cross?

The weather can have a significant impact on the walk and the enjoyment and safety of the participants. Weather forecasts for towns or villages can be compared with specialist forecasts for the mountains or inshore waters to help provide a fuller picture of the expected weather for the intended route, particularly if the walk is over exposed ground or near the coast. An understanding of the major weather systems that affect the UK and Ireland will aid interpretation of the forecast particularly with regards to temperature and precipitation. A basic awareness of the features that can be observed on the day to determine the speed and severity of possible weather changes, is a useful additional skill.



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

- When planning walks, identify from the map the expected hazards along the route and how severe the risks might be. During the walk, compare this with the hazards encountered on the ground and your dynamic assessment of the associated risks. How do they compare?
- Make a note of the forecast for the day and then compare that forecast with the weather you encounter. Try this with a variety of forecasts to evaluate the relative accuracy of various sources of weather information.
- Try and get hold of a variety of 'planning' documents and look at the information that is common to them.





SYLLABUS

4. HAZARDS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

HAZARDS;

4.1. Demonstrate the ability to recognise and manage common hazards in the environment whilst leading groups, including:

- Badly eroded trails, uneven and wet sections
- A variety of man-made features e.g. stiles, stepped decking, steps etc
- Animals; both livestock and wild
- Roads and traffic, including awareness of the Rules for Pedestrians in The Highway Code (UK) and the Rules For the Road (Ireland)
- Other users and their needs e.g. runners, bikers and horses
- Working environments e.g. farmyards, quarries, forestry operations
- Water features such as rivers or lakes
- Poor visibility

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES;

4.2. Be able to select an appropriate first aid kit and additional group equipment suited to the environment and prevailing conditions.

4.3. Deal with common injuries and medical problems in the countryside.

4.4. Manage self and group in a variety of different weather conditions including heat, cold, rain and high wind.

4.5. Take appropriate action to ensure the group and the casualty's well-being in the event of an incident or accident including knowing how to get appropriate assistance.

4.6. Plan and follow 'escape routes', using appropriate navigational techniques, to nearby assistance.

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

4.8. Explain the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of sunburn, dehydration, hypothermia and heat disorders.

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

It is no accident that identifying and managing hazards is a skill spread throughout the syllabus as doing so is central to the role. A skilled leader will automatically be evaluating progress, keeping check of position on the map, chatting to the group and looking out for hazards as one continuous process.

It needs to be acknowledged that the environment in which a Lowland Leader may operate should not be particularly hazardous; indeed the most dangerous part of any walk may well be driving to the start point. It is worth considering the above list of potential hazards that could be encountered and considering how they might be managed or avoided. With good preparation of the group and an intelligent evaluation of the weather forecast, the worst effects of the weather can be mitigated.

With a sensible amount of equipment the leader will be able to deal with most minor injuries; blisters, sprains and allergic reactions

are perhaps the most common. It is good practice to encourage people to declare any existing conditions so that the possible impact of health conditions such as asthma and diabetes on participants can be discussed with them in advance and the plan adapted accordingly if necessary.

If the situation evolves to one where further progress on the planned route is not possible, it may be possible to curtail the route. The main skill here is to be able to improvise a route to a possible pick-up point or assistance and then efficiently navigate that route. In a worst case scenario, you will have to manage the group, deal with any injuries and then send for assistance if no phone communication is possible, giving an accurate position and indication of the problem. Which organisations will be involved in any rescue will depend largely upon the area where the walk is taking place and researching this is a useful part of the planning process to ensure you know who to ask for in an emergency.



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

- When planning routes, prepare some ways of shortening them if necessary; these may be needed if the group is slower than anticipated.
- Prepare simple instructions that could be given to the group to enable them to reach a road or shelter if they get separated from the group or if it is you, the leader, who is incapacitated.
- One of the most hazardous parts of any walk is when roads must be followed or crossed. Roads for the Lowland Leader are what mountain streams are for the Mountain Leader. Develop some strategies for group management in those situations.





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

SYLLABUS

5. EQUIPMENT

5.1. Demonstrate knowledge of personal and group equipment required for day walks considering the environment and prevailing weather conditions.

5.2. Choose appropriate food and drink for day walks.

5.3. Demonstrate an understanding of additional equipment required by a leader.

5.4. Be able to pack equipment effectively for personal and group use.

5.5. Demonstrate an understanding of the design and construction of equipment, including its material characteristics, care and maintenance.

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

As a Lowland Leader your ability to equip yourself appropriately for a variety of conditions will enable you to carry out your role effectively. You are also likely to offer advice to novices on choice and suitability of clothing and equipment and this advice will need to take into account the intended use and available budget; less expensive alternatives can often perform nearly as well as more expensive, branded, outdoor clothing and will be perfectly adequate for those starting out in relatively benign conditions. Appropriate knowledge and understanding of what is available on the market is therefore useful.

Food and drink for the walk should meet the two main requirements of being easy to carry

and providing a good return of energy. It may well be the case that for shorter walks, snacks alone can be carried so long as a decent breakfast is assured. An understanding of the basics of nutrition will enable you to offer advice on the benefits of various foods.

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



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

- Go out for walks in foul weather! Evaluate your kit during and after the walk for its effectiveness at keeping you relatively comfortable.
- Compile a variety of kit lists for walks at different times of the year, with different forecasts, with a variety of groups and a variety of locations.
- Keep a look out for budget priced clothing and equipment and try to evaluate its effectiveness. A recommended kit list for a novice walker could be priced with a variety of budgets in mind.





 SYLLABUS

6. WALKING SKILLS

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

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

Walking across uneven ground can be a new skill for some participants and as a Lowland Leader you may need to provide some coaching or support to the members of your group about how to move safely and efficiently. Muddy fields, steep coastal paths and different types of stiles all provide their own movement challenges which as a leader you will need to help your group manage.

The pace of the walk is also your responsibility and different strategies can be

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



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

- Between training and assessment try to get plenty of full day walks under your belt; ideally carrying the kit that you might need as the leader of a group.
- Measure your speed to start developing an understanding of how quickly you move over certain types of terrain.
- Try and get on to some steeper paths and analyse how you move up and down them. How do you place your feet? Are your steps longer or shorter? The more that you can work out how you move the more able you will be to coach others in moving over steep or uneven paths.





Lowland Leaders should have the ability to choose from a range of techniques and select those that are appropriate to the terrain and conditions. They should be able to:

SYLLABUS

7. NAVIGATION

- 7.1.** Navigate using a variety of commonly used maps and understand the use of scales and symbols.
- 7.2.** Demonstrate an understanding of how contours and other cartographic methods are used to represent relief and use them to effectively to navigate in the terrain. Be able to recognise topographical features in the landscape.
- 7.3.** Orientate the map. Relate the map to the ground and vice versa. Recognise key features in the landscape and identify them on a map.
- 7.4.** Be able to relocate efficiently in a range of situations. Provide six figure grid reference on doing so.
- 7.5.** Measure distance accurately on a variety of maps and calculate how long it will take to get from one location to another.
- 7.6.** Effectively measure distance travelled on the ground using appropriate techniques inc. accurate timing.
- 7.7.** Use a compass effectively to indicate general direction of a footpath or linear feature.
- 7.8.** Navigate competently in poor visibility due to weather conditions or darkness.
- 7.9.** Explain and use the information given on maps about rights of way and access to land.
- 7.10.** Describe the benefits and limitations of using handheld GPS devices.

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

The ability to navigate in appropriate terrain is an essential skill for a Lowland Leader. The more comfortable you are navigating, the easier it will be to focus on looking after the group and achieving the aims for the day. The navigation skills described in the syllabus encompass the key competencies you should practise and master prior to assessment.

To help improve your navigation skills, plan walks that allow you to practise navigating in a different types of terrain such as forests, farmland and coastal paths; each will allow you to develop your understanding of how the map and the ground relate to each other. It is also worth gaining some practical experience of navigating with different brands of map including Ordnance Survey and Harvey as well as orienteering and local area/tourist walk maps to appreciate their differences and appropriate uses. Each will use a different scale; shifting scale can initially be quite confusing so practical experience is encouraged.

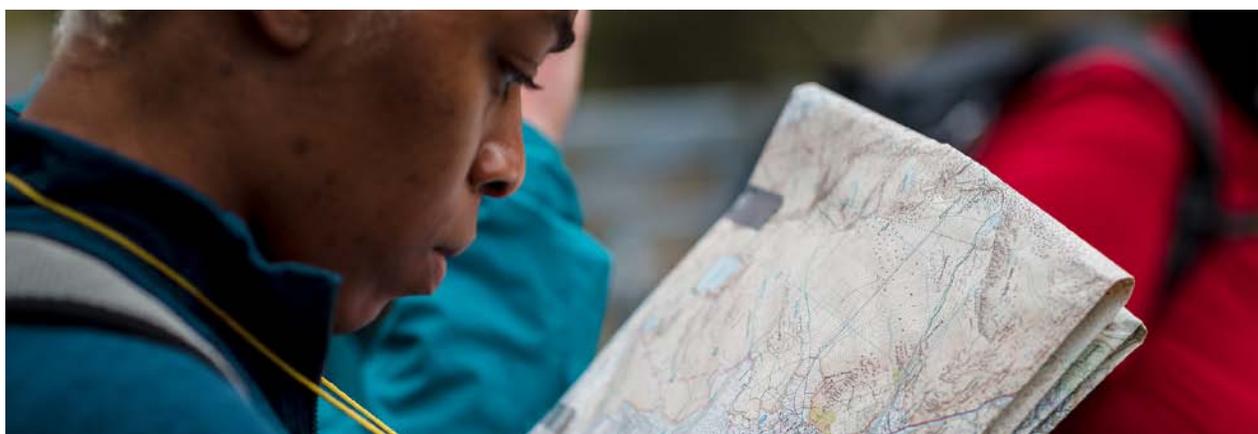
Your navigation skills will be primarily tested using the basic navigational tools of the map, compass and watch to follow marked paths and tracks, in good visibility and at night or in poor visibility. The primary tool here is the map, which when accurately 'set' to the surrounding landscape, using visible features or the compass, can give an indication of the direction of travel. Where this is not clear, the compass can be used to give a more accurate direction of travel.

In the sort of terrain where Lowland Leaders operate, close attention will often have to be paid to rights of way and identifying access land so that there are no issues with landowners. An understanding of the way in which rights of way are marked on maps as well as an appreciation of the fact that the indicated right of way may not exactly match the line of the path on the ground is important.



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

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





Lowland Leaders should be able to teach others and promote learning to ensure the safe enjoyment of lowland walking. They should be able to;

SYLLABUS

8. TEACHING AND LEARNING SKILLS

8.1. Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group needs.

8.2. Identify and use appropriate tasks to develop safe group activity.

8.3. Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a journey and success of the outcome.

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

Lowland Leaders need to quickly create an environment of trust and confidence within their group so that participants feel relaxed and comfortable to tackle new and challenging activities. Despite the lowland environment being relatively benign the activity and terrain can feel overwhelming to the uninitiated.

Age, ability, individual requirements, confidence and energy levels amongst the group will require different approaches to achieve success. Good communication skills are key. The ability to create rapport,

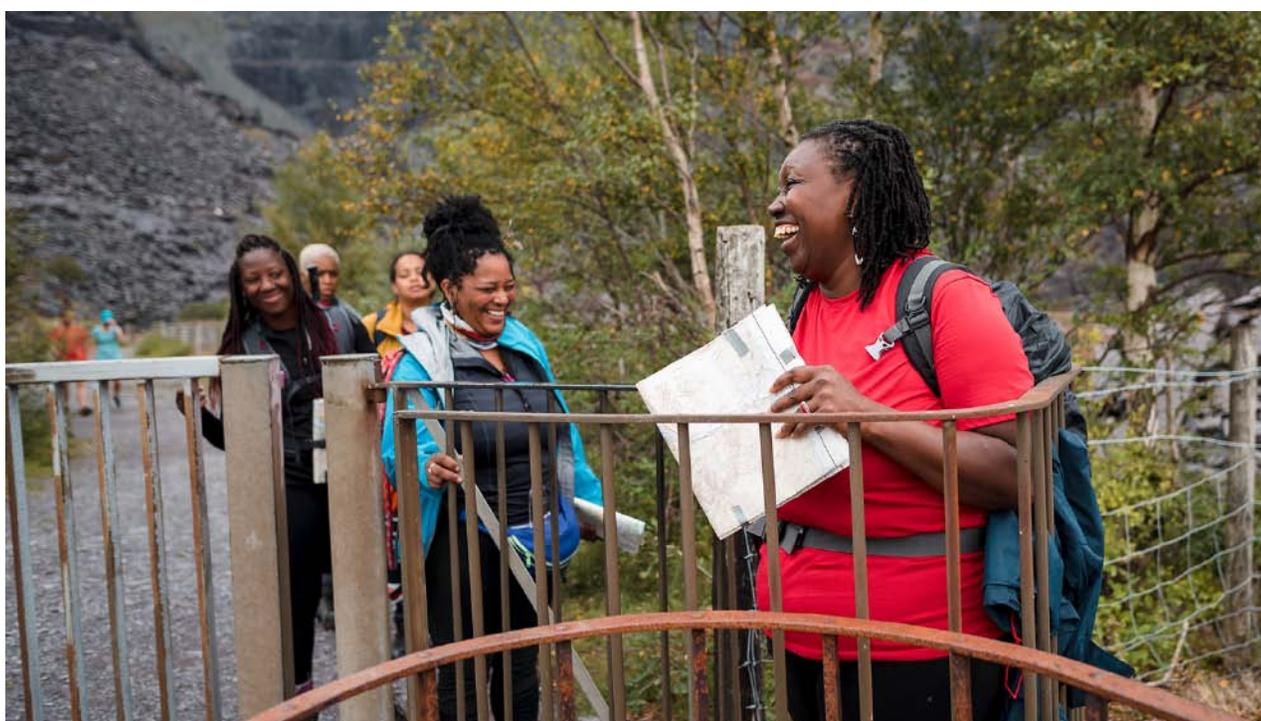
communicate at an appropriate level, use positive language, provide a variety of demonstration techniques, check for understanding through skilled questioning and give useful feedback and encouragement to individuals are the foundations of effective teaching.

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



KEY PRACTICE POINTS

- Develop a set of 'lesson plans' for teaching common tasks such as setting the map or packing equipment.
- Consider how you might teach a particular skill in a very direct, instructional style and how you would teach the same skill in a student-centred way. What might be the pros and cons of each?
- Consider the variety of groups you might work with and how you might adjust your approach to each.





Lowland Leaders introduce and support people to participate in walking, encouraging sustainable and sympathetic use of the outdoors by all users. They will be able to:

SYLLABUS

9. ACCESS, CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

9.1. Inspire and enthuse their groups in lowland terrain in the United Kingdom and Ireland and expand their personal knowledge*, appreciation, and understanding of lowland environments.

9.2. Demonstrate knowledge of permissive access agreements, rights of way and access legislation such as CRow Act 2000 and Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the importance of being aware of, and adhering to, access restrictions where relevant.

9.3. Explain how to obtain information about access to lowland terrain and know how, and to whom, access issues are reported.

9.4. Explain relevant campaigns and codes of good practice such as Countryside Code, Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Leave No Trace, and acknowledge one's responsibility to minimise impact and promote sustainable use of the outdoors.

9.5. Demonstrate knowledge of land management in lowland terrain and the long-term effects of the human pressures created by its multiple uses.

9.6. Demonstrate knowledge of relevant conservation legislation as well as the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use. Lowland Leaders should also show an appreciation for the challenge and complexity of conservation in lowland terrain.

*examples of relevant personal knowledge include flora, fauna, geology, landform processes (geomorphology), local history, heritage and language, place names, folklore, the evolution of our landscape and future challenges.

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

It is important for qualified Lowland Leaders to have sound general knowledge of lowland environments such as open countryside, farmland, woodlands, forests and coastal locations. A journey will be greatly enhanced by a leader if they can talk knowledgeably about a range of subjects and make the most of learning opportunities when they arise as the group travel through the countryside. The benefits of this to group members are myriad and may include:

- fostering a deeper appreciation of the natural world and the importance of conservation and sustainable recreation;
- a greater understanding of the pressures and constraints caused by varied land use and ownership;
- a recognition that access to lowland areas can be complex; and
- a greater appreciation of local culture, heritage and language.

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

during, or after a journey.

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

Areas with a special designation might be Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas, within which activities that are likely to damage the natural features for which the site is designated may require official consent or be forbidden.

In the case that temporary local restrictions are in place, or changes to access arrangements on the chosen route have occurred, Lowland Leaders should be familiar with sourcing relevant information as required and capable of adopting a flexible and diplomatic approach to minimise conflict. Sources of information include: local authorities, local community groups, local access forums, national access forums, National Park Authorities, guidebooks, maps, countryside agencies, internet, apps, and mountaineering councils. In addition, Lowland Leaders should recognise that all walkers have a role in maintaining access, especially in situations where access is not formally defined.



Mountain Training

The network of awarding bodies who administer skills courses and leadership qualifications. Approved providers deliver the courses.

Mountaineering councils

The councils protect the interests of walkers, climbers and mountaineers and the cliffs, hills and mountains they enjoy.



Mountain Training Association

Mountain Training's membership association providing support and development opportunities for trainee and qualified candidates.

SYLLABUS

10. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

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

CANDIDATE GUIDANCE NOTES

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

The **Mountain Training** part of this network provides skills training and nationally recognised leadership qualifications as well as information on good practice through a range of publications. Gaining a Mountain Training qualification is the formalisation of your experience and competence to be responsible for others while camping, walking, climbing or mountaineering. Through a network of approved course providers across the UK and Ireland, over 10,000 candidates attend a Mountain Training course each year and go on to lead and inspire millions of people. Mountain Training's vision, mission and ethos underpins all decision making and activity.

Candidates can join **Mountain Training's Association (MTA)** as a Trainee or Full member. In joining the association, you will have access to training opportunities to support your

development and become part of a community of trainee and qualified leaders with a shared interest. By providing the highest quality personal development opportunities including workshops, webinars and a quarterly magazine, Mountain Training's Association supports and develops its members to excel.

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

Hill walking clubs and organisations can be useful in guiding participants into long-term independent participation; they include well-established local or national clubs and less formal online groups. As a leader novices may look to you for advice on how to find other people to walk with and how to develop confidence and competence. Your ability to direct them to appropriate courses such as Mountain Training's Hill & Mountain Skills scheme or guidance on finding a club can lead to a lifetime of enjoyment.



APPENDIX 1 – DEFINITIONS

QUALITY LOW-LEVEL DAY

In terms of experience, the quality of a low-level walking day lies in such things as the conditions experienced both overhead and underfoot, the exploration of new areas and the journey undertaken.

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

- the individual takes part in the planning and leadership.
- navigation skills are required to navigate through complex footpath networks.
- experience must be in terrain and weather comparable to that found in UK and Ireland.
- knowledge is increased and skills practised.

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.

SUMMER AND WINTER CONDITIONS

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

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

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

POOR VISIBILITY/ DARKNESS

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

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

APPENDIX 2 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

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

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

OVERSEA EXPERIENCE

Whilst overseas experience can be useful as an indication of breadth of experience, these days, if used as part of your logged 'quality days', should be in similar terrain and conditions to those found in the UK to be truly relevant as preparation for assessment.

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

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

COURSE DELIVERY

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

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

Your training and assessment result will be recorded on the Candidate Management System (CMS).

EXEMPTION FROM TRAINING

Candidates who have completed Hill and Moorland Leader or Mountain Leader training do not need to apply for exemption from Lowland Leader training. You will still need to register for the scheme and book a Lowland Leader assessment.

Candidates who have not attended a training course and already have substantial personal experience in lowland terrain as well as experience in the leadership of groups may apply for exemption from training. To qualify for exemption candidates must, at the very least, meet the minimum experience requirements for attendance at an assessment course. They should also have at least two years recent experience of leading groups in lowland areas of the UK and Ireland.

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

There is no exemption from assessment.

APPENDIX 2 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FURTHER EXPERIENCE

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

According to the Health and Safety Executive there are four ways to demonstrate the competence of leaders.

These are:

- to hold the relevant qualification
- to hold an equivalent qualification
- to have received appropriate in-house training
- to be competent through experience

Mountain Training endorses this view, while emphasising that nationally recognised qualifications are the key components in such an approach.

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

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

CANDIDATE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND DLOG

Mountain Training uses software powered by *tahdah* to record your journey through our schemes.

You can use the system to:

- register for a qualification
- search for a training or assessment course
- join an association or mountaineering council
- buy recommended books from the Mountain Training shop
- record your experience in DLOG (the digital logbook)
- access e-learning modules
<https://mt.tahdah.me>

LOGGING YOUR EXPERIENCE

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

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

Top tips:

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

UPLOADING PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

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

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

SHARING YOUR DLOG

When you book on to a training or assessment course, your logbook will become visible to the course director.

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



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

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

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

"The workshops I've done have been brilliant and have definitely made me a better leader"

- Alex Kendall (MTA member, 2016)

WHO CAN JOIN

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

HOW TO JOIN

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

MEMBER BENEFITS

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

*full members

MOUNTAIN TRAINING – PUBLICATIONS

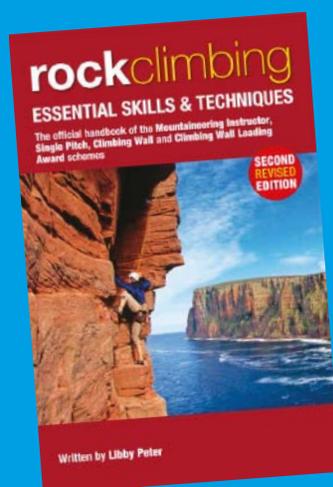
Official handbooks to support you through our schemes.



Hillwalking

STEVE LONG
ISBN 978 0954 151195

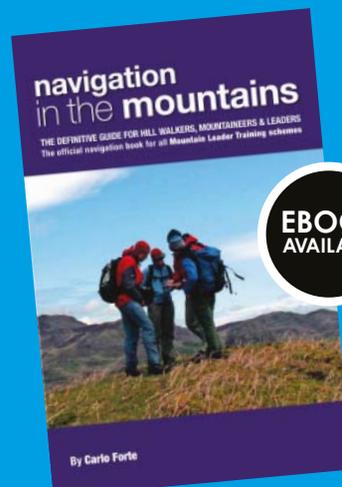
The official handbook of the Mountain Training walking schemes.



Rock Climbing

LIBBY PETER
ISBN 978 0954 151164

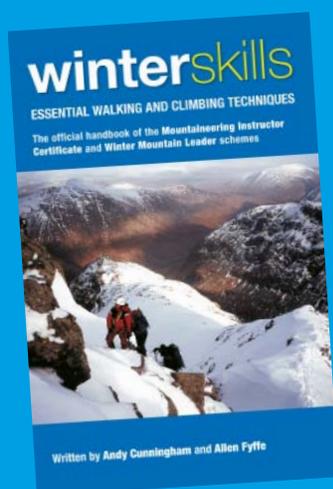
Essential skills and techniques for all aspects of single-pitch, multi-pitch and indoor climbing.



Navigation in the Mountains

CARLO FORTE
ISBN 978 0954 151157

Tools and techniques for navigating in the hills and mountains including winter, overseas and GPS.



Winter Skills

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ISBN 978 0954 151133

An essential reference tool for every mountaineer venturing onto non-glaciated snow and ice.



International Mountain Trekking

PLAS Y BRENNIN INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM
ISBN 978 0954 151171

A practical manual for trekkers and leaders covering all elements of international trekking.

Available in all good bookshops and online
www.mountain-training.org