

# STUDENT MOUNTAINEERING CLUBS FRAMEWORK

A Working Document for SMC's

Note:

*This document should be read in conjunction with the [‘Student Sport Ireland Adventure Sports Guidance working document’](#).*

*A synopsis of the following document has been included within the SSI ASG working document, and is titled ‘Mountaineering Ireland - Competence Progression Pathway’*

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Mountaineering Ireland</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8. Managing Club Activities</b>	<b>19</b>
Respect for Landowners, Local Communities and the Environment	3	Club Activity Plan	19
<b>2. Mountaineering Ireland and Student Mountaineering Clubs</b>	<b>3</b>	Session Plans	19
*Definition of Technical Advisor (TA) / Technical Expert (TE)	4	Risk Assessments	20
<b>3. Demonstrating Competence</b>	<b>5</b>	Near Misses, Incidences and Accidents	21
In-house training and Accreditation	5	Club Activity Report	21
<b>4. Student Mountaineering Club Members</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9. Managing Club Members</b>	<b>22</b>
Competency	6	Acknowledgement of Risk	22
<b>5. Student Mountaineering Club Activities</b>	<b>7</b>	Record of Attendance	23
Climbing – Indoors	7	Record of Training and Assessment	23
Climbing – Outdoors	7	<b>10. Club Equipment</b>	<b>24</b>
Hiking	8	Use of Club Equipment	24
Mountaineering	9	Management of Club PPE / Safety Equipment	24
Led & Non-led Activities	9	Borrowing of Club Equipment	25
Training Activities	9	<b>11. Club Events</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6. Competent Leaders</b>	<b>10</b>	Intervarsities	26
Record of Competence for Competent Leaders	10	Outdoor Events	27
National Qualifications and In-house Training – relevant to Student Mountaineering Clubs	10	Club Trips	27
National Qualifications and In-house Accreditations	12	<b>12. Club Documents, References and Contacts</b>	<b>28</b>
Pathway to Competency diagram	14	Club Documents	28
Activity Scenarios – Competent Leader to Novice Participant Ratios	15	Further Information	29
<b>7. Competent Participants</b>	<b>17</b>	Acknowledgments	29
In-house Training and Assessment per Activity	17	Contacts – Mountaineering Ireland and TA's/TE's	29

## 1. Mountaineering Ireland

Mountaineering Ireland (MI) is the National Governing Body (NGB) for climbing, hillwalking and all facets of mountaineering on the island of Ireland. MI's role is to represent the interests of hillwalkers and climbers and to advocate for Ireland's mountains. MI has over 16,500 members, 80% of whom are affiliated through 190 clubs, and 20% as individual members.

Our work includes:

- Promoting responsible participation in hillwalking and climbing.
- Supporting hillwalking and climbing clubs.
- Encouraging skills development and training.
- Hosting climbing competitions and developing high-performance climbing.
- Improving access and protecting the mountain and cliff environment.
- Influencing the policies that affect our activities.

### **Respect for Landowners, Local Communities and the Environment**

Access to the outdoors is fundamental to the activities of hiking and climbing. Much of our activity takes place on privately-owned land, with the goodwill and tolerance of landowners. Student Mountaineering Clubs (SMC's) are asked to recognise that we all share in the responsibility to protect access by helping to maintain positive relations with landowners and the local community in the areas where we hike and climb.

Most hiking and climbing activity in Ireland take place in sensitive natural environments. Enjoying our activities in these special places comes with a responsibility to minimise our impact on the environment. SMC's and their members are asked to help care for the natural environment by keeping within existing path lines where possible, not leaving any litter behind and by adhering to relevant guidelines issued by MI, or guidance specific to the areas we visit.

## 2. Mountaineering Ireland and Student Mountaineering Clubs

MI values how involvement in a student hiking, climbing or mountaineering club can lead to lifelong participation in these activities. Participation provides multiple benefits to participants, including enhanced mental and physical health, active citizenship and personal development.

This document intends to offer guidance to SMC's by providing a framework to assist club committees in planning and delivering club activities as safely as possible, by having a sufficient number of Competent Leaders to lead the clubs' activities. MI support, advise, and work with SMC's so that they can partake in their activities safely and sustainably. MI encourages SMCs to manage their own clubs' activities, where students are safely teaching and leading other students in climbing and hiking activities. MI recommends that club leaders are sufficiently trained by Technical Advisors (TA) / Technical Experts (TE)\* as detailed below.

This document is also an example of how SMC's may operate and offers general guidance in the development of a club's own Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's). For specific information on club activities, please see each club's SOP's. Each club is unique; with different needs, contexts and resources, and therefore each club's SOP's will reflect this. All parties must have read and agreed to the SOP's, which need to be approved between the SMC, TA/TE and the Sports Development Officer.

All active club members should be affiliated with MI through their SMC. As discussed below, all members attending the Intervarsities must be a member of MI. Details about MI club membership can be found here: [Mountaineering Ireland membership](#)

Implementation period: Given that each SMC is at a different stage of their development and has varying skill levels within the club membership, and considering the limitations on time and resources; it is intended that MI's recommended approach for SMC's may take 3-4 years to be fully implemented.

### **\*Definition of Technical Advisor (TA) / Technical Expert (TE)**

In the context of climbing and hillwalking, a TA/TE has a specific definition and describes an appropriately qualified instructor with the relevant expertise and experience who can provide guidance, formal and informal training and assessment, and supports to ensure safety, compliance, and best practices in outdoor activities. Their responsibilities can include:

1. Safety Assurance: Ensuring that all activities are conducted safely, using proper techniques and equipment.
2. Training and Instruction: Providing training to climbers and hillwalkers, ranging from beginners to advanced levels, on various technical aspects of the activities.
3. Risk Assessment: Conducting risk assessments and developing risk management strategies to minimize potential hazards.
4. Equipment Advice: Recommending appropriate equipment and ensuring it is used correctly, to include the monitoring, maintenance and record keeping of the equipment.
5. Regulatory Compliance: Ensuring that all activities comply with relevant regulations, standards, and best practices.
6. Incident Response: Advising on and sometimes managing responses to incidents or emergencies in climbing and hillwalking contexts and the appropriate incident and near miss reporting requirements.
7. Route Planning: Assisting with the planning of routes, including evaluating the difficulty and safety of proposed paths.

Criteria for a TA/TE:

- Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI), or Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (WMCI)
- Attended the TA/TE training course
- Listed as a TA/TE on the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) register of TA's/TE's
- Informed their insurance company they act as a TA/TE
- Have €6.5m insurance cover (instead of the standard €5m), to allow them to operate with universities/public authorities

### 3. Demonstrating Competence

Due to the duration of university courses, SMC's have a high rate of turnover of club members. To produce formal NGB-qualified leaders who can lead club activities in this short timeframe may not be possible. Mountain Training UK & Ireland is the awarding body for skills courses and qualifications in walking, climbing and mountaineering in the UK and Ireland.

Mountain Training sets out that competence can be described as the combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely. While emphasising that formal qualifications are the ideal, Mountain Training UK & Ireland, and MI, recognise four ways to demonstrate competence:

These are:

1. To hold the relevant National Qualification;
2. To hold an equivalent Qualification;
3. To have received appropriate In-house Training and Assessment;
4. To be competent through relevant and comprehensive experience.

#### **In-house Training and Accreditation**

Due to time constraints for students, appropriate In-house training will often be the most achievable pathway to competence. As set out in Mountain Training's documentation, In-house training is an appropriate alternative to National qualifications which can provide the club with a means of evidencing members' competency to partake in and lead activities. This training and assessment can focus on the specific needs of the club, given its activities and the environments in which the activities are carried out. The limitations of the In-house training will be stipulated by the TA/TE.

MI supports In-house training and assessment for SMC's, in conjunction with and overseen by an appropriate TA/TE. Club members who have an interest in upskilling and leading activities are encouraged to continue their training by pursuing National qualifications which would allow them to work in the industry in a professional capacity. To this end it is recommended that participants use their digital logbook to keep a record of personal activity and any In-house training and assessment.

To ensure the highest standards, the In-house training and assessment syllabus must be developed by a TA/TE who is a provider of the equivalent National qualifications. Discussions between the TA/TE and MI should take place in advance of the TA/TE developing the In-house syllabi for the club they are working with. MI has begun to form a panel of TA's/TE's who are committed to working with SMC's. Contact information for TA's/TE's can be found in 'Contacts' at the end of this document.

## 4. Student Mountaineering Club Members

It is MI's intention that students are afforded the opportunity to try the clubs' activities, and if the student wishes to further develop their skills in that activity, that a framework is available to them to become lifelong participants in that activity. To safely plan and deliver club activities, it is necessary to define the type of club member who is partaking in the activity based on their competency of the activity.

### Competency

Competence can be defined as the combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge that a person has, and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely. It is important to note that if a person is competent in one activity, it does not automatically mean that they are competent in other activities.

To aid in the planning and delivery of club activities, club members can be defined as:

- Novice Participant  
This person lacks the combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge, therefore lacking the ability to safely partake in an activity independently. All Novice participants must be accompanied by a Competent Leader when partaking in club activities.
- Competent Participant  
This person has a combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge, which allows them to safely partake in an activity independently. They must never act alone within club activities, and they have undergone the process for assessing participant competence by a Competent Leader.
- Competent Leader  
This person has a combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge, which allows them the ability to act as a Leader of Novice Participants in a club activity. They may have been a Competent Participant, who then gained additional experience, training and assessment from the club's TA/TE to become a Competent Leader. Competent Leaders may also be referred to as Supervisors, Instructors, Coaches, Activity Leaders or Hike Leaders. Up to a certain technical level (as detailed below), Competent Leaders train and assess novice participants to become Competent Participants.

### Notes:

1. *Leadership training: TA/TE delivers In-house or NGB courses to produce Competent Leaders.*
2. *Personal skills training can be delivered by: A Competent Leader (In-house or NGB award holder) who runs sessions within their scope, or by persons deemed competent by the TA/TE.*

## 5. Student Mountaineering Club Activities

A SMC may undertake the following activities which all come under the term 'Mountaineering':

1. Climbing
2. Hiking
3. Mountaineering

It is important to note that climbing consist of various disciplines both indoors and outdoors. If club members partake in activities which are not included in the club's Schedule of Activities, then such activities are not the responsibility of the club.

### **Climbing - Indoors**

- Indoor Bouldering  
Climbing on un-rope bouldering walls, where fall protection is provided by safety matting
- Indoor Bottom-rope climbing  
Climbing on walls/routes, where fall protection is provided by a rope which runs through an anchor at the top of the wall and back to the ground, which is controlled by another participant known as a belayer.
- Indoor Lead climbing  
Climbing on walls/routes, where fall protection is provided by connecting a rope to a series of fixed protection points as the climber progresses up the wall. The rope is controlled on the ground by another participant known as a belayer.

### **Climbing - Outdoors**

- Outdoor Bouldering  
Climbing on outdoor boulders, where fall protection is provided by portable bouldering mats. Other participants may 'spot' the climber, adding additional protection to the climber.
- Outdoor Bottom & Top-rope climbing  
Climbing on outdoor cliffs, where fall protection is provided by a rope which runs through an anchor at the top of the cliff, which is controlled by another participant known as a belayer.

- Outdoor Lead climbing (Higher-level Skills)

Climbing on outdoor cliffs, where fall protection is provided by connecting a rope to a series of protection points as the climber progresses up the cliff. The rope is controlled by another participant known as a belayer.

Outdoor lead climbing can be further defined as:

- Sport Climbing (Higher-level Skills)

Climbing on outdoor cliffs, where fall protection is provided by connecting a rope to a series of in-situ fixed protection points as the climber progresses up the cliff. The rope is controlled by another participant known as a belayer.

- Trad Climbing (Higher-level Skills)

Climbing on outdoor cliffs, where fall protection is provided by connecting a rope to a series of leader placed protection points which the climber places as they progress up the cliff. The rope is controlled by another participant known as a belayer.

Note:

*Soloing is a form of climbing on cliffs where the climber does not use a rope for fall protection, and the height goes beyond the effectiveness of a bouldering mat. Soloing is not a club activity.*

## Hiking\*

Club hikes can be defined as the following:

- Hiking – Level 1

Hikes on Lowland, Hill and Moorland terrain. Usually on durable, defined and constructed paths in daylight hours.

- Hiking – Level 2

Hikes on Hill, Moorland and Mountain terrain. Usually on and off paths in daylight hours.

- Hiking – Level 3

Hikes on Mountain terrain. Usually off path, including non-daylight hours.

Note:

*\*This does not include times when snow and ice prevail, and travel requires the skills and equipment needed to cope with the special hazards of winter conditions.*



## **Mountaineering**

- **Scrambling**  
Outdoor climbing on rocky mountain features – Uk and Ireland mountainous areas
- **Winter Climbing**  
Outdoor climbing on snow and ice - Uk and Ireland mountainous areas
- **Alpine Climbing**  
Outdoor climbing on rock, snow and ice on large mountains – Alpine areas

## **Club activities can be further defined as:**

- **Led Activity**  
An activity where Novice and/or less experienced participants are present. The participants require a formal level of instruction, supervision and support throughout the led activity.  
Examples of led activity would include Level 1 Hikes, taster sessions at the climbing wall or climbing in Dalkey Quarry with Novice Participants. All led activities require Competent Leaders to be present.
- **Non-led / Peer-to-peer Activity**  
An activity where only Competent Participants are present. These participants do not require a formal level of instruction, supervision or support throughout the activity. An example of this may be at an indoor climbing wall where both participants are competent, or on a Level 2 Hike where all participants are competent and responsible for themselves. During Non-led activities, also known as peer-to-peer, all participants should follow best practice such as buddy checking before climbing or ensuring all participants on the hike are properly prepared for the activity. No one person has responsibility for the safety or welfare of the group.
- **Training Activities**  
An activity is being run by a TA/TE or approved training provider with the intention of delivering, coaching or instructing new skills/knowledge during the activity, or assessing students' skills and knowledge.

### **Notes:**

1. *Leadership: Run by a TA/TE or approved training provider with the intention of delivering, coaching or instructing new skills/knowledge during the activity, and assessing students' skills and knowledge to become Competent Leaders.*
2. *Personal: Run by the above person, or by appropriate persons to run such activities. (Movement skills, S+C etc.)*

## 6. Competent Leaders

For Novice Participants to take part in club activities, they must be supervised by an appropriate number of Competent Leaders per activity.

On an annual basis, to quantify the number of Competent Leaders required per session, the club committee can use the Club Activity Plan and Sessions Plans to evaluate its needs for the upcoming year. Depending on the club's needs, the committee may identify Competent Participants who are showing the interest and qualities which would make them a viable candidate to become a Competent Leader. That member can then go forward for the appropriate training and assessments. The committee may also identify current Competent Leaders for further upskilling depending on the needs of the club.

Depending on the needs of the club, if the number of Competent Leaders required per activity cannot be met, then the club may engage in the services of an external instructor who holds the relevant / equivalent qualifications for the activity and environment, and who is suitably insured to provide that service.

Competent Participants must be trained up and assessed by the TA/TE or holder of the relevant National Qualification to become a Competent Leader.

### **Record of Competence for Competent Leaders**

In this document, the club keeps a record of all qualifications, In-house training and declarations of experience for all Competent Leaders in the club. This document should include information per leader such as the activity they were trained and assessed in, the dates and locations of training and assessment, and the name of the TA/TE who delivered the training and assessment per activity.

In addition, it is recommended that the appropriate first-aid, safeguarding and any other appropriate training has been provided. Details of this can also be kept in the document mentioned above.

### **National Qualifications and In-house Training – relevant to Student Mountaineering Clubs**

- **Mountain Training National Qualifications - to lead an activity**

To attain a Mountain Training National Qualification, one must gain experience in the activity as a participant and join the relevant NGB. They must register for the scheme and have a certain level of experience as a participant. They must then complete the training course, consolidate learning from the course, and then complete the assessment.

- **In-house Training and Accreditation - to lead an activity**

The syllabi for SMC In-house training and accreditation must be developed by the club's TA/TE.

The TA/TE must be an NGB provider for the NGB award that the In-house award is referenced against.

The Development process of the In-house syllabi should be in accordance with the following criteria:

1. As a point of reference, use Mountain Training qualifications syllabi as a guideline to develop an appropriate training and assessment syllabi to meet the specific needs of the club. If justified, elements of the National qualification syllabus which are not relevant to the specific needs of the club may be omitted.
2. Training and assessment should be conducted, with sufficient time between each to ensure delivery is to the highest standard.
3. Upon successful completion of an assessment, the TA/TE will provide a 'sign off', which will detail the extent of what the Competent Leader is allowed to do under their remit in terms of the activity, participants, ratios, locations and durations.

To evidence that a leader is competent to lead an activity, In-house training and assessment should follow these criteria:

- a. The participant gains sufficient experience in the activity
- b. The participant completes a training course
- c. The participant completes an assessment, re-validated every one to two years at the discretion of the TA/TE.

A culture of progressive skills development should be encouraged within clubs. This can be further supported by ongoing guidance from the TA/TE and/or Mountaineering Ireland.

Notes:

1. *If a club member has successfully completed a National qualification training course which is relevant to the activity, then this prior training may be used as a substitute for In-house training of that activity.*
2. *In-house training and assessment must be re-validated every one to two years at the discretion of the TA/TE. At the discretion of the TA/TE, the leader may go straight to the In-house assessment.*
3. *In-house limitations – upon successful assessment for Competent Participants and Competent Leaders per club activity, the club activities carried out by Competent Participants and Competent Leaders, including led activities by Competent Leaders, are limited to locations and environments which are similar locations and environments to where training and assessment for those activities took place.*

**National Qualifications and In-house Accreditations**

Given the activities of SMC's, below are the relevant National qualifications in relation to the recommended SMC In-house accreditations. This is only an example of In-house courses that may be developed by a TA/TE for a university, and other applicable courses may be developed at the discretion of the club and their TA/TE depending on the specific needs of that club.

<b><u>Club Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Mountain Training National Qualification</u></b>	<b><u>Student Mountaineering Club (SMC) In-house Accreditation to Instruct</u></b>
<b>Indoor Climbing</b>		
Bouldering	Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) or Rock-Climbing Instructor (RCI)	SMC - Indoor Climbing Instructor – Bouldering
Bottom-rope climbing	Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI) or Rock-Climbing Instructor (RCI)	SMC - Indoor Climbing Instructor – Bottom-rope
Lead climbing	Climbing Wall Development Instructor (CWDI)	SMC - Indoor Climbing Instructor – Lead climbing
<b>Outdoor Climbing</b>		
Bouldering	Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI)	SMC - Outdoor Climbing Instructor – Bouldering
Bottom & Top-rope Climbing	Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI)	SMC - Outdoor Climbing Instructor – Bottom & Top-rope
Bottom & Top-rope Rigging	Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI)	N/A ( <i>Higher-level Skills</i> )
Lead climbing - Sport	Rock Climbing Development Instructor (RCDI)	N/A ( <i>Higher-level Skills</i> )
Lead climbing - Trad	Rock Climbing Development Instructor (RCDI)	N/A ( <i>Higher-level Skills</i> )
<b><u>Hiking*</u></b>		
Hiking - Level 1	Lowland Leader Award, or Hill and Moorland Leader	SMC – Level 1 – Hike Leader
Hiking - Level 2	Hill and Moorland Leader, or Mountain Leader	SMC – Level 2 – Hike Leader
Hiking - Level 3	Mountain Leader	SMC – Level 3 – Hike Leader

Mountaineering		
Scrambling	Mountain and Climbing Instructor	N/A
Winter Climbing	Winter Mountain and Climbing Instructor	N/A
Alpine Climbing	Alpine Guide	N/A

**Notes:**

1. *For the purpose of distinguishing an In-house accreditation above, the general term 'Student Mountaineering Club' has been included in the naming of the accreditation, abbreviated with 'SMC'. When the In-house courses are being developed per university, it is recommended that the abbreviation for the specific university is inserted to replace 'SMC'. For example, for University College Cork Mountaineering Club, the course may be titled: 'UCCMC - Indoor Climbing Instructor – Bouldering'*
2. *Exemption from training & or the consolidation period of Mountain Training qualifications follows a standard procedure: It is therefore useful for club members to record all personal activity and any training & assessment courses including the name of their trainer, in their digital logbook. Exemptions are reviewed based on standard criteria which includes logbook evidence. All exemption applications must be sent to the Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer using the Exemption Form that can be found on the MI website.*
3. *\* For hiking, this does not include times when snow and ice prevail, and travel requires the skills and equipment needed to cope with the special hazards of winter conditions.*

## Pathway to Competency

This diagram illustrates the cycle of how a Novice Participant can progress to become a Competent Participant, allowing them to partake in their activity independently.

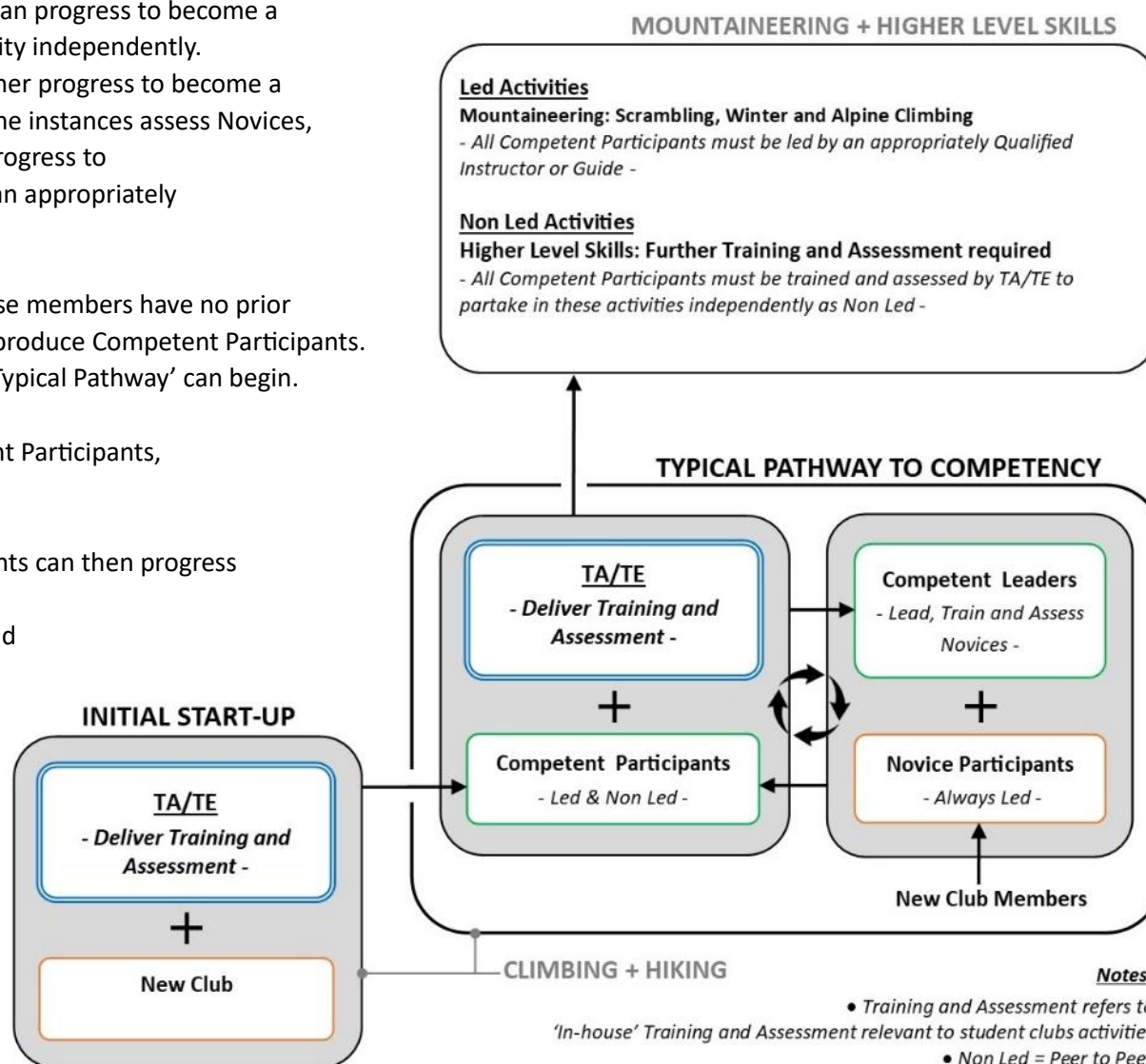
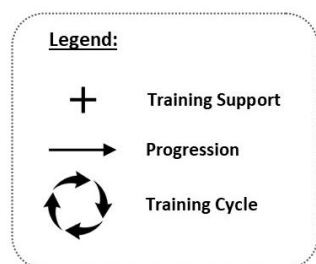
As a Competent Participant, and with the TA/TE, they can further progress to become a Competent Leader which allows them to lead, train and in some instances assess Novices, which completes the cycle. Competent Participants can also progress to

Mountaineering / Higher level skills along with the TA/TE, or an appropriately qualified instructor or guide.

**Initial Start-Up:** This is for new clubs that are starting up, whose members have no prior experience with the activities. The aim of this 'Start-Up' is to produce Competent Participants. Once there are Competent Participants in the club, then the 'Typical Pathway' can begin.

**Typical Pathway to Competency:** Once the club has Competent Participants, the pathway can work in a self-perpetuating manner.

**Mountaineering and Higher Level Skills:** Competent Participants can then progress to Mountaineering, and Higher-level Skills such as Botton and Top-Rope Rigging and Lead climbing in Sport or Trad Climbing.



**Activity Scenarios – Competent Leader to Novice Participant Ratios**

Below are the recommended participant profiles relative to the activity, and the maximum leader to Novice ratio.

<u>Club Activity</u>	<u>Suggested participant profile</u>	<u>Competent Leader to Novice Participant Ratios</u>
<b>Indoor Climbing</b> Climbing that takes place at indoor university climbing walls.		
Bouldering	Novice climbers and others with some indoor climbing experience.	1:8*
Bottom-rope climbing		1:6*
Lead climbing	Previous experience of indoor climbing, with sufficient skill to progress to lead climbing.	1:2*
*Number of participants actively climbing at any one time.		
<b>Outdoor Climbing</b> Single-Pitch Rock Climbing and Bouldering that take place in non-remote locations.		
Bouldering	Novice climbers and others with some climbing experience.	2:8
Bottom & Top-rope climbing		2:12
Lead climbing – Sport ( <i>Higher-level Skills</i> )	N/A	N/A
Lead climbing – Trad ( <i>Higher-level Skills</i> )	N/A	N/A
Bottom & Top-Rope Rigging ( <i>Higher-level Skills</i> )	N/A	N/A

Hiking		
<u>Hiking – Level 1</u>	Participants with a moderate level of general fitness but little or no hiking experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended maximum group size of 25 including at least 2 leaders; on durable, defined and constructed paths.</li> <li>Multiples of the above ratio can go out, but operate as discrete groups leaving gaps or traveling in counter directions to minimise the impact of one larger group.</li> </ul>
<u>Hiking – Level 2</u>	Participants should have a moderate level of hiking fitness and ideally experience of minimum two Level 1 hikes, or equivalent experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended maximum group size of 15 including at least 2 leaders.</li> <li>Multiples of the above ratio can go out but operate as discrete groups leaving gaps or traveling in counter directions to minimise the impact of one larger group.</li> </ul>
<u>Hiking – Level 3</u>	Participants should have a good level of hiking fitness and ideally experience of minimum two Level 2 hikes, or equivalent experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hike leaders should have completed the training and assessment as outlined above and should have experience leading minimum two level 2 hikes.</li> <li>Recommended maximum group size of 15 including at least 2 leaders.</li> <li>Multiples of the above ratio can go out but operate as discrete groups leaving gaps or traveling in counter directions to minimise the impact of one larger group.</li> </ul>

Notes:

1. For outdoor activities, Competent Leader to Novice Participant ratios have a minimum of two leaders per group i.e. 2:8. For safety, a Competent Leader should not be acting alone outdoors with a group. Should an incident occur, having two leaders gives the leaders greater capacity when managing the group.
2. If the club wish, they may increase the number of Competent Leaders, and the number of Novice Participants can then increase accordingly. Leaders may opt for smaller groups in response to the conditions, terrain and other criteria.
3. **Non-led / Peer to Peer Hiking: For all levels of hikes, if all Participants are deemed competent for that level of activity, then no formal leader is required as participants are operating on a peer-to-peer basis.**



## 7. Competent Participants

To become a Competent Participant, the club member must have a combination of training, skills, experience, knowledge, and the ability to undertake the activity safely and independently. The club member may have started as a Novice Participant and progressed to becoming a Competent Participant by receiving and gaining the applicable training, skills, experience and knowledge required. Or the club member may already have the skills, experience and knowledge required, and at the discretion of the relevant Competent Leader, the club member may go directly to assessment.

Novices are trained up and assessed by Competent Leaders to become Competent Participants; except for trad climbing, sport climbing and bottom & top-rope rigging.

On becoming a Competent Participant, the club member no longer requires direct supervision, instruction or leadership from a Competent Leader. The Competent Participant can partake in their activity safely and independently, and with other Competent Participants of that activity on a peer-to-peer basis. As is the nature of climbing and hiking, these activities tend to take place in pairs or small groups, and therefore Competent Participants take responsibility for themselves, and buddy check their peers to support good practice and safety.

### **In-house Training and Assessment per Activity**

#### **Climbing**

Competent Leaders can train and assess Novices in the following activities:

- Indoor Bouldering
- Indoor Bottom-rope climbing
- Indoor Lead climbing
- Outdoor Bouldering
- Outdoor Bottom and top-rope climbing

For the following activities, training and assessment must be delivered by a TA/TE, or a training provider holding the relevant qualification:

- Outdoor Bottom & top-rope rigging (Higher-level Skills) – Minimum qualification RCI
- Outdoor Lead climbing: Sport and Trad (Higher-level Skills) – Minimum qualification RCDI

### **Hiking**

Competent Leaders can train and assess Novices to become Competent Participants in the following activities:

- Hiking: Level 1 / Lowland, Hill and Moorland terrain. Personal proficiency can be trained and assed by a Level 2 Hike Leader
- Hiking: Level 2 / Hill, Moorland and Mountain terrain. Personal proficiency can be trained and assed by a Level 3 Hike Leader
- Hiking: Level 3 / Mountain terrain. Personal proficiency can be trained and assed by a TA/TE, or a Level 3 Hike Leader at the discretion of the TA/TE

### **Mountaineering**

Scrambling, winter climbing and alpine climbing will always be conducted as a led activity with an appropriately qualified external instructor / guide.

## 8. Managing Club Activities

To plan and deliver club activities safely, the club should plan their activities, both as a yearly plan and in more detail within session plans. To identify the hazards, risks and mitigation strategies per club activity, the club should also prepare and evaluate Risk Assessments before any activities commence. These Risk Assessments should be prepared for each individual activity, or, where an indoor activity is repeated regularly in the same location, a Risk Assessment may be prepared for that activity which will be one in a series of similar activities.

### **Club Activity Plan**

Before any activities begin, the club should prepare and agree on a schedule of activities that will take place over the course of the year. The club will only plan for activities that are outlined in Section 5 - Student Mountaineering Club Activities. The Club Activity Plan document should include information per activity such as date, location, activity description, participant profile present (e.g. Novices), if the activity is Led or Non-Led, and linking to the Session Plan and Risk Assessment for that activity.

- **Club Activity Planning**

When the activity details have been decided, a combined Session Plan and Risk Assessment document should be compiled to assist the Activity Leader/s in preparing for the activity. The Session Plan will include the details of the activity, and the Risk assessment will assist in foreseeing the risks associated with that activity, and the measures put in place to mitigate those risks as much as possible.

Prior to the activity; the combined document should be reviewed by all Activity Leaders, and for outdoor activities, a review of the weather forecast, daylight hours and tide times, should be conducted to foresee any possible weather changes during the activity.

To verify that the combined Session Plan and Risk Assessment document for the activity has been reviewed, a separate record should be kept, detailing the activity details (activity type, location, date, daylight hours and tide times) and the names of the leaders who reviewed the combined document.

### **Session Plans**

A Session Plan should detail the specifics of the activity, which will be useful for the Activity Leaders when planning the session. A Session Plan should be compiled for each scheduled club activity, and it should be reviewed regularly by the Activity Leaders and the committee member/s responsible for the activity. If the same activity is repeated regularly, the Session Plans may be reused once the location and details are the same as the other session. The details of the Session Plan may include:

- Activity description
- Activity location
- Activity date
- Duration of activity (Start time, end time, daylight hours and tide times)
- Group and individual equipment required

- Participant profile (e.g. Novices)
- Number of participants
- Number of leaders
- Other relevant details such as primary hiking route chosen
- Contingencies in case of change, such as whether deterioration, plan B & escape routes identified
- Incident and emergency procedures

Session Plans should be updated to account for any operational changes in the activity.

### **Risk Assessments**

A Risk Assessment is a vital safety document which assesses the risks involved in an activity, and it details what we can do to mitigate those risks so that we can carry out the activity as safely as possible. It can also assess unforeseen risks, such as a change in the weather, and a contingency plan can then be created to account for such a change. Given that circumstances do change, it is best practice to consider Risk Assessment's in two forms:

1. Written Risk Assessment – this is compiled and completed prior to the activity taking place, accounting for what knowledge we have of the activity and the environment the activity will take place in.
2. Dynamic Risk Assessment – this is the continuous Risk Assessment, which is a continual review of the situation by the Activity Leader or leaders before and during the activity. They may need to brief the participants on any hazards or risks identified by the Dynamic Risk Assessment and detail the mitigation measures needed to act safely in that situation.

Risk Assessments should be prepared by suitably experienced and competent people, who have a thorough understanding of the activity, and the participants involved, an understanding of safety and best practice in the case of emergency, and where possible - have an understanding of the context or environment in which the activity is being held.

*Note: Prior to the activity, all Risk Assessments must be approved by the Student Mountaineering Club's Technical Advisor / Technical Expert, and by the university's Sports Development Officer, and any other relevant persons.*

### **Near Misses, Incidents and Accidents**

Like any sport or outdoor activity, incidents do occur, and when this happens - proper training and assessment for Activity Leaders will aid them in making better decisions in those situations. Having a 'safety first' culture within the club should be central to their activities, which should reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring, whilst also enabling participants to develop their skills without taking undue risks.

It is recommended that appropriate First Aid training be conducted within the club, especially for Activity Leaders. Should an incident occur, the processes involved should be detailed in the combined Session Plan and Risk Assessment document relative to the activity and the environment the activity is taking place in. These details could be included as an 'Incident Response' section at the foot of the Risk Assessment, clearly identifying the protocol that needs to be taken should an incident occur.

*Note: All accidents, near misses and significant incidents should be recorded in an 'Incident Report Form' and submitted immediately to the relevant person within the SMC's university, and to MI's main contact for SMC's which is detailed at the end of this document. In addition, the MI website has an Incident & near miss reporting facility that can also be used to support learnings and advice to others.*

### **Club Activity Report**

Each club should have a legacy of knowledge and experience that can be passed onto the incoming committee so they can efficiently and safely plan the activities for the coming year. At the end of each academic year, a report should be compiled detailing the club's activities over that period, detailing the activities, participant numbers, training, and any recommendations or learnings over that past year.

## 9. Managing Club Members

All club members must be made aware of the risks involved in the club's activities, and all club members must understand and accept these risks. MI's participation statement plays a key role in this:

***Mountaineering Ireland** recognises that hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.*

### **Acknowledgement of Risk**

Within the management of the SMC, all club members must read and understand the club's participation statement, and agree to accepting the risks involved, via a series of Acknowledgment of Risk Form's which are relevant to the activity. In addition to these forms, the club must record attendance of club members at all club sessions, and detail the competence achieved by its club members. Members can be made aware of the risks via an in-person induction, video or a written document.

All documentation must be kept for a minimum of six years, and all Acknowledgement of Risk Forms must be completed by all club members on an annual basis. The process involved may include:

1. Acknowledgement of Risk Form – Pre-activity  
Before taking part in the activity, the member must complete this document which informs them of the general risks associated with the activity.
2. Induction Session  
Once the member has completed the form, the Activity Leader will supervise the member on an induction session, which highlights the risks involved in the activity. The Activity Leader will then assess if the member understands the risks associated with that activity. (Relevant to climbing only).
3. Acknowledgement of Risk Form – Post-activity  
On completion of the induction, the member will complete an additional document relative to the activity known as an Acknowledgement of Risk Form – Post-activity.
4. Direct to training and assessment – in order to become a Competent Participant  
At the discretion of the Activity Leader and/or the club committee, and based on the previous experience of the member, that member may be given the opportunity to proceed directly to training, and/or direct to assessment.

### **Record of Attendance**

Attendance at all club sessions by all club members must be recorded and kept on file for a minimum of six years. This document should include information such as:

- Member name and student number
- Date and location of session
- Details as to what forms, training and assessments that members have completed.
- Incident details - should an incident occur within the session. In addition, the incident should be recorded in an Incident Report Form and submitted as previously discussed in this document.
- Any other details that may be relevant to the running of the club sessions.

### **Record of Training and Assessment**

To track the competency of club members, a record must be kept which details the members' progression as they move through training and assessment. This document should be kept on file for a minimum of six years.

Once a Novice participant has completed the relevant training and assessments per activity, they become a Competent Participant in those activities - which then allows them to act independent of instruction whilst partaking in that activity. Competent Participants, or suitably competent and experienced members, may then go forward to training and assessment with the TA/TE. On passing the assessments, the member then becomes a Competent Leader for the club in that activity.

The document should include details such as what type of training and assessment each member has completed, who delivered the training and assessment, including dates, locations, and any other relevant information for the record.

In addition, club members should use their digital logbook to record personal activity, and training & assessment details. This can provide a record of experience, currency and evidence should they wish to go on to complete a Mountain Training Qualification or Scheme.

## 10. Club Equipment

If the club has its own mountaineering equipment for use during the clubs' activities, then that equipment must be well managed in terms of its use and safety. It is recommended that within the club there is a designated person who will manage the club's equipment, e.g. an Equipment Officer. This equipment may be seen as Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) / Safety Equipment, for use within scheduled club activities. Or as equipment which is being lent to members outside of scheduled club activities.

### **Use of Club Equipment**

Examples of who may use the equipment are:

1. At scheduled club activities

- Competent Participants
- Competent Leaders
- Novice Participants under the supervision / instruction of a Competent Leader

2. Outside of scheduled club activities (and approved by the clubs Equipment Officer)

- Competent Participants
- Competent Leaders

### **Management of Club PPE / Safety Equipment**

Most climbing equipment can be classified as PPE, and will require a management system to monitor its use, condition, inspection details and its recommended use / lifespan as per the manufactures details, along with a proposed date of retirement etc. Each piece of equipment should therefore be labelled with an identification tag to keep track of its use over its lifespan.

A spreadsheet document, e.g. 'Club Equipment', should be created, detailing each piece of equipment, providing the status of each piece as mentioned above.

It is recommended that inspections of climbing equipment should be carried out pre & post every activity and a formal check by a competent person every twelve months. The Equipment Officer, with support from the TA/TE (or a third party who holds the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor certificate (MCI) or relevant qualification), will undertake formal, thorough and systematic inspections of the club equipment. Any equipment which is deemed unsafe or unfit for purpose, must be removed from the club's equipment store, destroyed, and noted on the Club Equipment spreadsheet.



### **Borrowing of Club Equipment**

If club equipment is being used outside of scheduled club activities, then those who are borrowing the equipment must be suitably competent to use the equipment, and they must be approved by the clubs Equipment Officer to do so. A log should be kept within the Club Equipment spreadsheet, which details who is borrowing the equipment, and listing details such as the equipment borrowed, dates out & returned, location, incidents/events, repair, withdrawal, and destruction as appropriate.

To authorise the borrowing of club equipment, the Equipment Officer will need to cross check that the club member requesting the equipment has completed the In-house assessment relative to the equipment being borrowed. For example, if a club member would like to borrow an outdoor bouldering mat, then the member would need to have completed the assessment for 'SC - Outdoor Bouldering'. These competency requirements to borrow club equipment should be developed by the clubs TA/TE along with the clubs Equipment Officer.

## 11. Club Events

SMC's regularly host events throughout the year. Some of these may include climbing competitions, outdoor events or club trips away.

### Intervarsities

This is an annual climbing competition hosted by a SMC and supported by MI. SMCs around the island of Ireland take it in turns to organise and host the event.

It is the club's responsibility to organise and manage the event. The event is covered under MI's insurance, and, at the discretion of the host university, under the host Universities insurance also. Every club member who is entering the competition must be over 18, and they must be a member of MI, ideally affiliated through their SMC or as an individual member.

Each SMC partaking in the competition will operate as their own group, self managing their own club members. Each SMC will provide for their own group the necessary amount of suitably competent belayers who have the relevant In-house training and accreditation, or the relevant National qualification. Each club will also provide a Chief-belayer for their club, who will support their club's belayers. The chief-belayer will provide a safety brief for their club's belayers before the competition begins, and they must also hold the relevant In-house accreditation or the relevant National qualification. To promote best practice in the climbing zone, the club should also nominate floor walkers who ideally have the relevant experience, In-house training and accreditation, or the relevant National qualification.

The host club must ensure:

- An MI Event Statement has been submitted to MI.
- A schedule or programme has been compiled which details the events activities and timings.
- A Risk Assessment for the event has been compiled and approved. This must be checked by the host club's TA/TE or an instructor with the relevant National qualification, or with the relevant staff member in MI.
- The event has been approved by the host SMC's Sports Development Officer.
- A competitor list must be submitted to MI confirming that each competitor is a member of MI through their affiliated SMC.
- A list must be submitted to MI detailing the suitably competent belayers who have the relevant In-house training and accreditation, or the relevant National qualification. Details should include the belayers name, record of their relevant training & accreditation, dates, and who they were trained and assessed by.
- All competitors prior to competing have read, understood and signed a Participation Statement, stating that they accept the risks involved in the competition.
- Where applicable, and at the discretion of the host venue, SMC members may be asked to individually register with the host venue prior to climbing.
- MI will provide the ropes for the event, but all other PPE equipment must be supplied by the SMC's – and all equipment must be checked by the relevant person in the club and deemed fit for purpose.

### **Outdoor Events**

Social outdoor gatherings for Student Clubs, such as a trad climbing weekend in the Burren, should consist of Competent Participants or Competent Leaders, who have the relevant experience in trad climbing. Like any event, good planning and management is key to best practice and safety. If the event is being hosted by a particular club, they should compile the list of documents below. If the event is a shared event between various clubs, each individual club should compile the following list of documents for their own club prior to the event.

- A schedule or programme has been compiled which details the events activities, locations, travel and timings, and any other relevant logistics.
- A participant list including everyone's details such as their medical details, emergency contact, their related experience and accreditations or awards relevant to the planned activities.
- A Risk Assessment for the event has been compiled and approved (by the Host and/or all individual clubs). This must be checked by the Host and/or all individual clubs TA/TE, or an instructor with the relevant National qualification.
- The event has been approved by the Host clubs Sports Development Officer, and all other clubs must have their attendance approved by their own clubs Sports Development Officer.
- All participants prior to attending have read, understood and signed a Participation Statement, stating that they accept the risks involved in the event.

*Note: For any outdoor event involving more than 50 people, please consult [Mountaineering Ireland's Events Policy & Guidelines](#), and submit an Event Commitment Statement to the relevant MI team member.*

### **Club Trips**

Club trips will follow the same procedures as 'Outdoor Events' above, but specific to an individual club. The club may allow Novice Participants to attend, and all Novice Participants will be supervised and instructed by Competent Leaders who hold the related training and accreditation applicable to the activity, and within the ratios stated within this document.

## 12. Club Documents, References and Contacts

As mentioned, there are several documents that a SMC may need to create to manage their club safely and efficiently. Below is a summary of these documents, and a club should add to this list any other relevant documents or spreadsheets they feel will be useful in managing their own club.

### **Club Documents**

#### Managing Club Activities

- Club Activity Plan document
- A Session Plan
- Risk Assessments
- Club Activity Report

#### Managing Club Members

- Acknowledgement of Risk Form – Pre-activity
- Acknowledgement of Risk Form – Post-activity
- Record of Attendance

#### Competent Participants / Leaders

- Detailed Syllabi for In-house Training and Assessment – Developed by TA/TE
- Record of Training and Assessment
- Record of Competence for Competent Leaders
- All members pursuing formal NGB awards should keep an up-to-date Digital Logbook of personal activity, training and assessment courses.

#### Club Equipment

- Club Equipment + Lending Log

### **Further Information**

Below are the links that are referenced in this document, including additional useful links and acknowledgement of support.

- [Student Sport Ireland Adventure Sports Guidance document](#)
- [Mountaineering Ireland - Membership](#)
- [Mountain Training - National Guidelines for Climbing & Walking Leaders](#)
- [Mountain Training - Who can lead, instruct or coach?](#)
- [Mountain Training - Our pathways](#)
- [Mountaineering Ireland - Training resources and skills videos](#)
- [Mountaineering Ireland – Advice on access and care for the environment](#)
- [Mountaineering Ireland's Events Policy & Guidelines](#)

### **Acknowledgments**

Key supporting documents and information provided by Damien O'Sullivan, Paul Kellagher, Brian Bateson and Steven Fahy.

### **Contacts**

#### Mountaineering Ireland

- Student Mountaineering Clubs Contact:  
Michael Duffy, Climbing Development Officer  
[michael@mountaineering.ie](mailto:michael@mountaineering.ie)
- Training Contact:  
Jane Carney, Training Officer & Technical Advisor  
[jane@mountaineering.ie](mailto:jane@mountaineering.ie)
- Northern Ireland Contact:  
Ricky Bell, Youth Development Officer  
[ricky@mountaineering.ie](mailto:ricky@mountaineering.ie)

TA's/TE's

For TA/TE contacts, please contact:

- [Jane Carney at Mountaineering Ireland](#), or
- [TA/TE contacts on AMI website](#)