



Mountain Leader

**Guidance notes for
trainers and assessors**



Introduction

These guidance notes are designed to assist trainers and assessors in the delivery of Mountain Leader training and assessment courses. They should be used in conjunction with the Mountain Leader Candidate Handbook and national Mountain Training board quality manual. This document will be updated when necessary; a revision date can be found at the bottom of each page.

Trainers

Trainers should assist candidates to progress towards assessment. Different candidates benefit from different styles of delivery. Although trainers have a responsibility to work to the Mountain Leader syllabus, they must also structure their courses to accommodate the varying strengths and weaknesses of candidates. Courses should concentrate on the skills that candidates may have difficulty in learning without expert guidance, whilst not forgetting that in reality the skills of good mountain leaders are integrated into a holistic performance. At the end of the course trainers should assist candidates to develop their action plans. It is valuable to review the course programme and the candidates' progress at the end of each day. Candidates should be given individual debriefings and should leave the training course with a good idea of what is required of them during the consolidation period.

Assessors

Assessors evaluate the performance of a candidate against the syllabus requirements. Assessments should enable everyone to perform to the best of their ability under suitably testing mountain conditions. Assessors should ensure that candidates understand the tasks required of them and are given sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their competence. Assessors should remember the importance of a holistic approach to the skills of good mountain leaders by limiting the time devoted to single techniques in isolation. Assessors must provide feedback to candidates and should explain how this will be given. An assessor should make a realistic and objective assessment against the nationally recognised standard and not decide results by comparing candidates' abilities.

1. Group management and the responsibilities of the group leader

Trainers

Training in leadership needs to be a balance between a theoretical and practical approach to group management and the leader's responsibilities. Teaching of leadership works best if it is integrated into practical skills training, whereas 'accident' and 'emergency' exercises may well be simulated. Trainers should include the more commonplace leadership tasks that occur, for example managing a group over broken terrain encountered as part of a planned journey in the mountains. Training staff should recognise that they are acting as role models for candidates through their own practice during a course.

Steep ground might provide some of the best opportunities for candidates to role play as group leaders. Candidates' confidence and ability can differ enormously on this sort of terrain, reflecting the variations normally found in walking groups.

Trainers should be well versed in the literature on leadership and the responsibilities of a leader, as specified for candidates, in addition to developing their own resources. Trainers should draw on their own and the candidates' experiences to discuss and expand this topic in the classroom and on the hill.

Trainers should ensure that candidates are made aware of the importance of assessing the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the group and planning the journey accordingly. Trainers should discuss with candidates how best to carry out initial preparation and budgeting exercises and how to complete detailed planning before leading day and overnight expeditions into the mountains. As well as consolidating candidates' personal experience and skills, trainers should identify differing styles of leadership e.g. coercive, permissive, cooperative, and outline the characteristics of each. Candidates should be made aware of some of the formal requirements of the planning process such as gaining parental consent, organising insurance and obtaining organisational permissions.

Risk assessments for both accompanied and unaccompanied journeys should be undertaken. In the case of unaccompanied journeys trainers should make the candidates aware of the different methods of supervising groups at a distance, e.g. 'shadowing', designated meetings with a supervisor or written messages left at specific points. Procedures for when and how the group leader or the group might call for assistance should also be discussed. Candidates must be aware that unaccompanied journeys should only be undertaken by suitably experienced groups.

Trainers should provide opportunities to analyse situations as they occur during practical sessions and review exercises, which involve an element of leadership.

Assessors

Assessors should examine the candidate's ability to undertake risk assessments for planned journeys and expeditions and their strategies for dealing with emergency situations. During the practical assessment candidates should be presented with some common emergency situations.

It is difficult to provide genuine leadership situations on assessment. Groups of assessment candidates are not likely to react like a novice party. Assessors should be clear in their own minds as to which aspects of leadership they can assess within the structure of the course. They should carefully consider how they use simulated situations for assessment and should make clear to candidates what is being assessed at any given time. Self-evaluation should be encouraged as the scheme depends upon leaders being aware of their strengths and limitations.

Planning skills can initially be assessed with a home or evening written paper but they should not be looked at in isolation from a candidate's ability to lead a group effectively on the hill.

Candidates' understanding of different styles of leadership should be assessed. Candidates should be able to identify the style with which they are most comfortable and be able to make judgements as to when changes of style might be appropriate when leading a group. Assessors should give candidates opportunities to show understanding of the issues surrounding effective management in a variety of mountain situations, including unaccompanied journeys.

Certain aspects of group management, such as pace setting, briefings and communication are relatively easy to evaluate, as are the choice and preparation of personal equipment, selection of routes over varying terrain and reaction to set emergency situations. However the best course of action for an unanticipated situation has to be weighed carefully against possible alternatives. It is common for these situations to be used as further training for the benefit of all concerned.

It can be beneficial to assess candidates operating with near-novice groups. However, great care should be taken to see that no party is adversely affected by the experience. It is possible that an unsatisfactory day could be given to either the candidate or the group; assessors must therefore satisfy themselves as to what is to be gained from this exercise. When working with groups, candidates should be briefed thoroughly and given full charge of the group, thus allowing the development of a proper relationship. The assessor may then act as the assistant leader and only intervene for elements of further training or if the group's safety is in question. It is not generally satisfactory to have more than one candidate involved with a group during any one session. The candidate's role and commitment to the group and the group's reaction to the leader need careful observation; only very

experienced assessors should take on this task and even then, the welfare of the group must come first.

Assessors should give daily debriefs, with special regard to leadership aspects. Such sessions will provide a vital platform for discussion and opportunities to compare the perceptions of all parties involved.

2. Navigation

Trainers

Whilst candidates will be expected to be reasonably proficient navigators this may not always be the case. Many experienced walkers have done little navigating in poor weather conditions or have employed only a limited range of techniques. Others may have mainly followed paths and used walking guides.

Teaching all the basic navigation skills will be beneficial. This will be revision for some but could be used as a model for those candidates who are in a position to teach basic navigation to their own groups. Trainers should teach navigation in relation to group leadership, including route selection and party supervision, remembering that candidates must cope with both navigation and leadership issues simultaneously.

Maps of different types and scale should be available during the course. The use of navigation aids such as global positioning systems and altimeters should be discussed. It may be useful to give practical demonstrations of these devices. Candidates should be encouraged to use the appropriate technique at any particular time and also to pay attention to the terrain around them.

Part of the training should be allocated to choosing routes over mixed and difficult terrain without the use of a map. Night navigation is often used when no poor visibility navigation has been possible during daylight hours. Trainers may also wish to include night navigation even if poor visibility has been encountered, as it is not uncommon to be walking off the hill in poor light. It should be remembered that on a clear night, navigation may be no more difficult than in daylight.

Navigation should be presented in a structured form so that the candidates can progress throughout the course. The candidates should finish the course being aware of the level of navigation ability required and what they need to do to achieve this.

Assessors

The assessor should structure the tasks to ensure that all relevant navigation techniques are seen. Navigation will be assessed throughout the course so assessors can usually afford to settle candidates by initially setting simple navigation tasks. Assessors need to be certain that any errors are through lack of ability rather than as

a result of 'exam nerves' or their own failure to communicate clearly. Very careful and precise briefing of the candidate concerning what is being asked of them is essential. The other candidates must also be briefed about their role while someone else is leading the group.

Candidates should be given time to demonstrate their level of navigation ability to the assessor. They should be allowed to complete the task to the best of their ability and not be pressured into making quick decisions and mistakes. Candidates should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to adopt the appropriate technique for the situation. The assessor should look at the task set from the viewpoint of someone navigating over unfamiliar ground in a stressful situation. A balance must be struck between micro-navigation, often assessed in a moorland situation, and the broader style of navigation used when following a path or defined feature. Micro-navigation can allow a large number of comparable legs to be set in a relatively short space of time. However, a mountain walk can also provide opportunities to assess navigation while reminding everyone of the nature of the activity. In all cases the elements of group management and leadership and environmental issues should not be neglected.

Visibility will obviously influence the type of navigation tasks set, as assessors must satisfy themselves that candidates can navigate in the full range of weather conditions. When the weather is good then more accurate navigation can be asked for to compensate for the lack of poor visibility. At these times night navigation may well be required although this is no guarantee of poor visibility. In these situations the skill of the assessor in selecting the appropriate terrain and setting suitable tasks is vital to the success of the assessment. Every navigation task set should help the assessor to draw relevant conclusions about the candidate.

Candidates who make a simple mistake should be given time to resolve the situation. The ability to identify and correct an error is both an essential skill for a mountain leader and an informative process for an assessor. The choice of appropriate techniques and the efficiency of their application may be as important as the arrival at a designated point for the assessment process.

Navigation ability must be tested with map and compass alone without the use of GPS, altimeter or other similar equipment. If candidates carry navigation aids their ability to use them may be discussed as an additional training element.

3. Access and the environment

Trainers

Continued use of the mountain environment depends on sensitivity and an awareness of other land use interests. This aspect of the syllabus is therefore fundamental and should be integrated throughout the course as opportunities arise. It is recommended that a discussion session complements the evaluation of practical examples during the course. It is desirable that some venues which specifically highlight environmental issues are selected.

Recreational use of upland areas represents only one of the many demands placed upon these environments. These demands may at times conflict and trainers have a responsibility to ensure that candidates have sufficient knowledge to operate without inadvertently creating tension with other land users.

Upland areas, where the climate is typically severe, are often particularly sensitive to change and opportunities should be built into a course to illustrate the impact of recreational and other upland use on the balance of habitats. Measures to minimise or control these effects should be illustrated during a course.

Trainers must be aware of current legislation as it affects the upland and remote areas of the UK. It is common for candidates to have limited personal experience or involvement in these issues and trainers should ensure that candidates leave the course with an understanding of the current legal situation.

Mountain leaders may operate in unfamiliar areas. It is therefore essential that they know how to obtain current information about access. Trainers should ensure that candidates are fully aware of the significance of Rights of Way and access arrangements as shown on maps. They should also appreciate the different legal rights in different areas of the UK. Many mountainous areas are designated as being of particular environmental or historical value; the implication of these designations should be impressed upon the candidate.

The principles in the accepted codes of practice should be embedded throughout the course. The concept of an environmental audit i.e. a consideration of the environmental impact of one's activities could form a useful part of the course.

It is important that on a training course, staff try to impart knowledge about differing aspects of the mountain environment. Candidates should be encouraged to discuss areas of personal expertise with the rest of the group and to impart what knowledge they may have. Candidates can be helped to develop the confidence to talk about their knowledge through a positive demonstration by training staff. Guidance may be given on resources available for further development. Mountain Training has developed a sample environmental paper (see Mountain Leader Candidate

Handbook Appendix 6), which may well be used to demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge.

Assessors

An assessor can gain an understanding of candidates' experience and attitudes towards this crucial aspect of the syllabus by reviewing their DLOG and asking follow-up questions. Although a written paper may be of value and provide a stimulus for worthwhile discussion, this aspect lends itself to be evaluated throughout a course either as opportunities arise or as they are engineered by the choice of venue. It is common for a candidate to be asked to prepare a discussion topic and then lead a group session on relevant local or national access and environmental issues.

The criteria applied to the assessment of this area of the syllabus, with its wide range of topics and possible levels of expertise, will need to be flexible. It should, nonetheless, be a clear part of the assessment process and should play a part in any broader assessment decision. Issues of access and the environment are of fundamental importance in effective mountain outdoor leadership. Assessors should not hesitate to defer a candidate if they feel that the range of experience demonstrated contributes to a serious lack of awareness of the importance of access and the environment, or that the practice of the candidate has, or may have, a negative impact. Assessors may look for knowledge and enthusiasm over a wide range of mountain related subjects but should not expect equal levels of expertise across them all.

A positive attitude to learning and imparting knowledge on the part of the candidate may well be the over-riding concern. The assessment of candidates in this area of the syllabus needs to be flexible and allow for variations in personal interests and depths of knowledge. Mountain Training has developed a sample environmental paper (see Mountain Leader Candidate Handbook Appendix 6), which may well help assessors understand the expected standard.

Candidates should be familiar with current legislation that may differ between the home nations.

Assessors should be confident that candidates are aware of the other interests, both commercial and recreational, in upland areas. They should be particularly aware of and sensitive to the potential conflict between their own imported values and those of local communities. Assessors must be confident that a candidate in no way jeopardises existing arrangements through insensitive actions.

Recreational pressures may contribute to the loss of access to certain areas as well as a degradation of the physical environment. Assessors should therefore feel free to offer additional training at assessment in this aspect of the syllabus.

Knowledge of sources of current information is vital to planning any route. It is possible to incorporate this in a planning exercise during an assessment course. This would provide opportunities to discuss real situations as they arise and to offer further training.

The implications of the various protection designations should be understood, as should the value of the relevant code.

4. Hazards and emergency procedures

There are a number of distinct types of hazard that might arise in the mountains. These are best considered under separate headings, although avoiding or dealing with them may involve many of the same principles.

Hazards of steep ground

Trainers

For many candidates this aspect of the syllabus will be completely new and needs to be taught in a sympathetic manner. The judgements and skills required to lead a group through steep ground without the use of a rope should be covered. The emphasis must be that the use of a rope is for unplanned circumstances e.g. as a result of a navigation mistake or an error of judgement. It should be continually emphasised that this is not rock climbing. Even candidates who are rock climbers may have problems adapting to the use of a rope on its own. Trainers must examine each candidate's logbook to ascertain their background experience. With comfort and educational principles in mind, the terrain chosen should not be intimidating. Trainers who strive for realism should always consider the outcome of an unguarded moment or a lapse of concentration.

Trainers should draw upon their own experiences to convince candidates, many of whom believe they will never take groups on to steep ground, that there are group management and rope skills which they can acquire and which may be invaluable one day. As with all emergency equipment, the choice of an emergency rope will have an impact on its effectiveness and should be discussed with candidates.

Following an introduction to rope management, knots and their relevant application, a day is generally devoted to putting these skills into practice. It is recommended that emphasis be placed on using these techniques in descent, the most likely situation to occur. Candidates should be able to use a rope to safeguard group members and themselves, where required, using appropriate techniques, to scramble over or down a short, steep or rocky section of ground. With safety, comfort and educational principles in mind, the terrain chosen should not be intimidating. The use of lowers where the group member's full body weight is on the

rope, using complicated rope harnesses such as the Thompson knot or triple bowline, is outside the scope of the award.

Whilst there is no one prescribed way of using a rope, the methods taught should be simple, safe and appropriate and a range of techniques should be covered. The candidates should also be sufficiently skilled that they can practise these techniques safely on their own after the training has finished. Ideally this aspect of the syllabus will also be put into the context of a mountain day during the course and not just treated as a 'set-piece' exercise.

The main focus of the day should be the selection and use of anchors, as this requires considerable practice. Much valuable training can be experienced whilst working in pairs but it should not be forgotten that in reality the leader would often be in charge of a larger group. Relevant situations where the problems of group management can be discussed and demonstrated should be included at some point.

The techniques and skills of dealing with a single group member experiencing difficulties should also be covered. Various methods of giving security, both with and without a rope, should be explored. The scheme expects proficiency with the rope alone. The use of a sling and screw-gate karabiner is outside the scope of the award.

It is important that candidates are introduced to the idea that there is a continuum of types of terrain which will tend to dictate the appropriate technique. Verbal reassurance, simple physical support, the use of a rope to instil confidence, the rapid use of a direct belay and 'full on' anchoring and belaying may all have their place: the vital skill to be developed is an awareness of where those techniques are appropriate.

Assessors

When assessing this aspect of the syllabus the assessor should examine the skills of group management on steep terrain both with and without the use of a rope. While there should be no undue emphasis on this part of the syllabus there should be a number of occasions during the assessment when it can be examined. This must not be in an unduly intimidating situation. Candidates should be able to tackle the problems in a relaxed frame of mind with reasonable amounts of time to complete tasks. The methods demonstrated should be safe, secure, efficient and practical with assessors recognising that there are usually several acceptable solutions.

Management skills such as the positioning of the group in relation to the leader and the various forms of un-rope assistance are valuable to a potential leader and should be examined.

Environmental hazards

Trainers

These subjects are most easily covered in a lecture or tutorial session although they can be referred to at any suitable point during the course. For example, loose rock is a hazard which may be encountered on steep ground, while flooding and water hazards are often interrelated.

Assessors

The candidates' understanding of environmental hazards can be examined by means of written questions or by informal discussion throughout the course, especially when relevant situations arise. It may be beneficial to use areas where terrain hazards can be used to test the judgement of candidates.

Water hazards

Trainers

Water hazards encompass a number of aspects such as dealing with bogs, marshes, streams and rivers. River crossings in particular can be hazardous and the training must reflect this and not be trivialised, as many candidates will not have experienced the power of even small streams. The value of sound preparation before should be stressed. Training should be a combination of theoretical and practical work with the emphasis firmly on avoiding water hazards, especially river crossings. Allowing candidates to experience the power of a current to reinforce the serious nature of river crossings should be an important part of this session. Trainers must bear in mind the difficulties of safeguarding candidates in moving water.

Assessors

This aspect of the syllabus can be assessed through both written and oral questions and by practical demonstrations, for which group activity is acceptable. Attention should be given to hazard avoidance, sound preparation and a thorough understanding of the techniques and dangers of river crossing. It may be appropriate to deliver further training in river crossing once it has been established that candidates have an understanding of the potential dangers.

Emergency procedures

Many mountaineers will encounter an emergency in the hills and leaders should be thoroughly prepared for these situations. It should be understood that emergencies may not be a result of an error on the part of the leader but can be the result of an unforeseen accident happening to a party member or other encountered on the hill.

Trainers

Accident and emergency procedures should be covered in detail. The candidates should be taught methods of search and evacuation. They should also be taught improvised rescue techniques so they could deal with a minor evacuation if necessary.

Assessors

Emergency procedures can be assessed by a combination of written and oral examination and practical work. Assessors should accept that there might be different solutions to examination situations. This area lends itself to discussion, particularly in groups, when differences of opinion may arise and can be used for the benefit of all candidates.

Assessors should be confident about the candidates' knowledge and ability regarding accident procedure and their responses to emergency situations. Candidates should exercise reasonable judgement and an awareness of the consequences of any particular course of action.

The use of appropriate equipment can greatly increase the overall safety and enjoyment of a group. Candidates, trainers and assessors will be aware that a huge variety of equipment is currently available. However when it comes to considering what is 'appropriate', any decision has to balance objectives, aspirations, economics and equipment availability.

5. Equipment

Trainers

It is important to spend some time examining and discussing equipment needs with candidates. Candidates should be aware that their equipment has implications for the safety and comfort of themselves and their group. If a candidate does not have suitable equipment, trainers should be able to offer constructive advice and discuss available options. It may be appropriate for trainers to demonstrate their own personal and group equipment, discussing items that they or other trainers may elect to carry.

Candidates should be encouraged to travel light, yet must also be able to deal with emergency situations. Informal discussions offer excellent opportunities to show candidates the wide variety of equipment that is available. Trainers should ensure that all candidates have an understanding of and ability to use the equipment they will need as leaders and the depth of knowledge required to advise others.

Assessors

An assessment course provides many opportunities to examine the suitability of each candidate's personal equipment. Equipment should be examined with regard to safety, comfort and efficiency, allowing for personal opinion that will have been developed over previous months or years. Candidates need to be able to operate as party leaders in poor conditions and choice of personal equipment will have a bearing on their ability to do this.

Candidates' knowledge of various types of equipment requires examination, especially with regard to their recommendations to others. Opportunities to do this may be provided in a written paper.

6. Expedition skills

Trainers

Training courses must contain at least a one-night/two-day mountain journey of an absolute minimum of 24 hours duration. The candidates should be self-sufficient, carrying all personal and group requirements. The expedition provides the opportunity for the trainer to share an intensive period of time with the candidates in the mountain environment. This should present numerous opportunities to train all aspects of the syllabus in context, building on the learning that has taken place during other elements of the course. Perhaps most importantly, the expedition should provide the opportunity to enjoy mountaineering at its best, away from roads and the constraints of everyday living, in a situation where the need for self-reliance and personal responsibility is paramount.

A Mountain Leader should be able to advise a novice about equipment for undertaking mountain journeys in the UK. Trainers should therefore make every effort to provide a wide range of equipment for candidates to use during the course. Although candidates will frequently wish to provide their own equipment, it is important that they also have the opportunity to evaluate other equipment.

Even where candidates have some experience of going on expedition, the basic skills of packing and carrying should be addressed. Many candidates assume that a well prepared leader carries equipment to cater for every eventuality, whereas in reality this can result in being overburdened and therefore less effective as a leader. Modern lightweight equipment has its advantages, but if unavailable it should not result in a candidate carrying an excessively heavy load. Candidates should be

encouraged to work as a team and carry essential group equipment between them.

During a short expedition food should provide energy, be light to carry, require minimal fuel to cook and be enjoyable to eat. Trainers should ensure that candidates have some basic nutritional knowledge, including an understanding of the significant difference between simple sugars and complex carbohydrates. Candidates' preferences can provide the basis for a discussion on suitable food. Some courses provide expedition rations, some require the candidates to provide their own food, while others provide a budget and integrate planning and purchase into the course itself.

Candidates must develop an awareness of the difference between food that is appropriate for personal use and that which is suitable for novices, who may be cooking on stoves for the first time. Food preparation and hygiene should be considered.

A training course should provide the opportunity for candidates to use a range of stoves. The safety aspects relating to the use of different stoves and fuels must be considered, as must the serious issues associated with stove use near tents.

The combined experience of candidates may be used as the basis for a discussion on campsites. Until extremes have been experienced, the vagaries of mountain weather may well be underestimated, leading to a false sense of security in fine conditions. Issues of hygiene, toilet practices and water availability, as well as the discreet location of tents, should also be discussed.

Other forms of mountain shelter should be discussed. A bothy, bivi or mountain hut could be included, in addition to a one-night camp, to extend the mountain experience of candidates. A bivouac is not an essential element of a Mountain Leader training course, but the ability and confidence to bivi (either planned or unplanned) is a useful mountain skill and many candidates would benefit from the experience.

Assessors

Assessment courses should contain at least a two-night, three-day mountain journey of an absolute minimum of 48 hours duration. As well as demonstrating an ability to be self-reliant for consecutive days, the expedition places candidates in continuous contact with the mountain environment, creating numerous opportunities to explore all elements of the syllabus.

Candidates would usually be expected to arrive with all the necessary equipment for the expedition. Although each individual should be self-sufficient, it is likely that candidates will be able to rationalise group equipment. Many leaders are tempted to carry equipment for every eventuality. However, it is important to encourage a

common sense approach in order to minimise the load carried thus helping to make the expedition a constructive experience. The food and equipment candidates choose for themselves may provide an insight for the assessor, but it should also be remembered that a mountain leader would be responsible for advising novices about selection and use of stoves, tents and other expedition equipment.

Candidates should be aware of the existence of alternatives to camping in the mountains. It is possible that the assessment expedition might utilise one of these alternatives for one of the nights in circumstances where this is beneficial e.g. in extreme weather or an improvised bivi when walking at night away from previously pitched tents.

7. Weather

Trainers

Trainers must be aware that weather is an important subject that has to be pitched at the correct level for the candidates. The trainer should identify the basic level of knowledge required to enable the candidates to make appropriate judgements based on commonly available information. This can be achieved through lectures, tutorials and seminars and by directing candidates to suitable material.

Additionally, it is recommended that this topic be integrated within the course on a daily basis using practical observation. Forecasts and synoptic charts should be used and compared with the local weather conditions. Interpretation and forecasting based on weather signs and patterns illustrate the practical application of this aspect of the syllabus.

Assessors

Weather knowledge might be assessed through written and oral examination including the use of home papers. Asking candidates to make daily interpretations of the weather at the start of the day and then reinforcing this on the hill emphasises and places in context the relevance of weather prediction. The assessor should be confident that candidates are able to understand how to access all the commonly available types of weather forecast and be able to evaluate their relative accuracy and reliability. They should also understand those weather forecasts and understand how mountains may affect the prevailing weather systems. Finally they should be able to integrate their understanding of the likely weather conditions into their planning as mountain leaders.

8. Background knowledge

Trainers

Trainers should introduce candidates to a variety of resources to enable them to expand their understanding of the development of mountaineering and hill walking. They should also introduce candidates to the role of Mountain Training, the Mountaineering Councils and the Mountain Training Association and of how they work with other agencies that have interests in the mountains. This can be achieved through lectures and an integrated approach throughout the course.

Assessors

Assessors must be confident that candidates operate in a suitably sensitive way in order to avoid conflict between their activities and those of other hill users.

Candidates' overall knowledge of the development of the activity and roles of national bodies should be investigated. This can be achieved through a variety and combination of ways, e.g. home papers, discussion or set course papers.

Appendix 1

Definitions

1.1 Mountainous country

For the purpose of the Mountain Leader scheme, 'mountainous country' may be defined as wild country which may contain unavoidable steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help. In the United Kingdom and Ireland mountainous country includes:

- Snowdonia
- Brecon Beacons
- Lake District
- Mountains of Mourne
- Scottish Highlands
- Galloway Hills
- Cork & Kerry Mountains
- Galway & Mayo Mountains
- Donegal Mountains
- Dublin & Wicklow Mountains

1.2 Quality Mountain Days (QMDs)

In terms of experience, the quality of a mountain day lies in such things as the conditions experienced both overhead and underfoot, the exploration of new areas, the terrain covered and the physical and mental challenge. Such days make a positive contribution towards a person's development and maturity as an all-round mountaineer.

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

- the individual takes part in the planning and leadership.
- navigation skills are required away from marked paths.
- experience must be in terrain and weather comparable to that found in UK and Irish hills.
- knowledge is increased and skills practised.
- attention is paid to safety.
- the journey is five hours or more.
- adverse conditions may be encountered.
- ascent of a substantial peak would normally be included in the day.