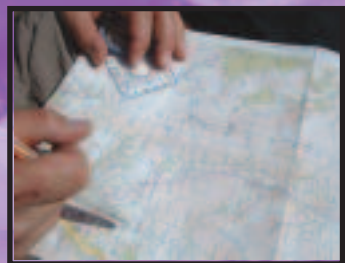


# Walking Group Leader Handbook



For those who wish to supervise  
walking groups in the  
United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland

# Preface

This booklet contains information which aids progression through the Walking Group Leader Award (WGL) scheme. It is designed to support the knowledge and experience of candidates, trainers and assessors whilst at the same time it avoids prescribing techniques. There are many technical manuals for hill walkers and mountaineers that illustrate an evolving range of personal and leadership techniques. These notes are designed to complement such literature.

The booklet is divided into four parts:

- **Prospectus** that explains the way you progress through the Walking Group Leader scheme from registration to assessment.
- **Syllabus** that lists the skills of a Walking Group Leader.
- **Guidance Notes** that help advise candidates and their trainers and assessors of appropriate interpretation of the syllabus and preparation for training and assessment.
- **Appendices** that provide background information.

## Participation Statement

Mountain Leader Training (MLT) recognises that climbing, hill walking 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. MLT has developed a range of training and assessment schemes and provides associated supporting literature to help leaders manage these risks and to enable new participants to have positive experiences while learning about their responsibilities.

## Acknowledgements

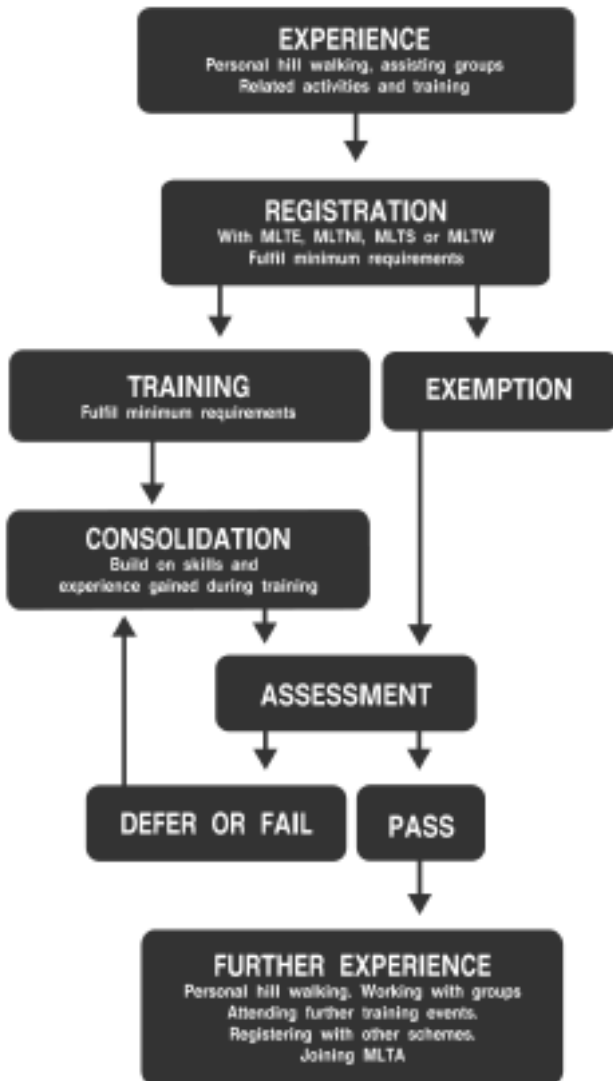
Many people have contributed to the preparation of this handbook by attending MLTUK working party meetings and by making detailed and constructive comments on the draft. Grateful thanks are due to board members and staff of the home nation Training Boards, their course Providers and the Mountain Training Trust for help in the production of this publication.

Prepared by the officers and the administrative staff of MLTE, MLTNI, MLTS, MLTW and MLTUK

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# The WGL Scheme at a Glance



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Photo: Malcolm Creasey

## 1 Introduction

The Walking Group Leader Award (WGL) is a nationally accredited award developed by Mountain Leader Training UK (MLTUK). The scheme is operated by Mountain Leader Training England (MLTE), Mountain Leader Training NI (MLTNI), Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS) and Mountain Leader Training Wales (MLTW) as part of a National Framework of awards for those leading and instructing in hill walking, climbing and mountaineering (see Appendix 3).

The WGL is the award for leaders of hill-walking groups in defined terrain and conditions. The scheme has been designed to complement the long established Mountain Leader Award (ML), which trains leaders with the skills to lead walking groups in all mountain areas of the UK and Ireland in summer conditions.

The WGL is also aimed at those who have already achieved training or accreditation through the wide range of local or organisational schemes which are available. All Mountain Leader Training awards are designed for those with a personal commitment to the activity and are centred on the belief that personal experience and understanding of the inherent risks of hill walking and climbing are the best ways to maximise safety and good judgement.

## **2 Scope of the Scheme**

2.1 The WGL Award offers the opportunity to gain experience and demonstrate technical competence in leading groups on hill walks in areas of the UK and Ireland that fall within the technical definition outlined below. Such areas may often be subject to hostile weather conditions and require an element of self-sufficiency and this is reflected in the syllabus of this scheme (see also Appendix 1).

Suitable Terrain for the WGL will meet the following four criteria:

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

2.2 Where leaders or their employers have doubts about the scope of an award and its margins they should consult the Secretary of their home nation Training Board. A technical adviser may also assist leaders with specific issues such as seasonal conditions and group ratios. In the case of the WGL scheme this may be a Mountaineering Instructor (MIA or MIC) or British Mountain Guide (BMG).

2.3 Completion of a training course is not a qualification in itself.

2.4 It is the combination of technical competence and leadership skills supported by a wide range of experience that forms the basis for effective group management. The scheme addresses all these elements. However, the employer or operating authority must ultimately decide whether a leader possesses the personal attributes needed to take responsibility for a particular group of people.

2.5 Access to the upland environment can mean freedom, adventure, beauty and solitude, but these benefits need to be considered in a wider context. Leaders working with groups should strive to inform them about access and conservation issues. They should demonstrate due regard for other walkers, landowners, users and rural communities.

2.6 This scheme does not provide training and assessment in the skills required to cope with the special hazards of winter conditions, particularly snow and ice, which in some areas can be encountered at almost any time of the year.

2.7 The supervision of groups in easily-accessed camping sites is covered within the scope of the scheme, whereas remote camping in inaccessible areas is not.

### **3 Stages in the Scheme**

The scheme consists of the following stages:

- demonstrate and develop a genuine interest in hill walking and leading groups
- register with the WGL scheme
- attend a WGL training course
- consolidate experience and build on the skills and techniques of the training course
- attend a WGL assessment course
- continue to log personal and leadership experience, including attending relevant courses

### **4 Registration**

To register candidates should have at least one year's experience of hill walking and have an interest in leading hill-walking groups. Candidates must be at least eighteen years of age. Candidates should consider whether the WGL or the ML scheme is more appropriate for their skills, experience and the activities of their groups.

### **5 Training**

- 5.1 Before attending a training course, candidates must be registered on the Walking Group Leader Award scheme and have completed at least twenty hill-walking days (see Appendix 2).
- 5.2 Candidates must attend a training course with a Provider approved by a home nation Training Board. Courses are delivered in a variety of formats, often residential and have a minimum thirty hours of contact time with the trainers. Courses are delivered by a British Mountain Guide (BMG), Mountaineering Instructor (MIA/MIC) or International Mountain Leader (IML) with supporting staff holding at least the ML award. They work at a maximum ratio of six candidates : one trainer with the Course Director having a practical involvement in each course. Lists of approved Providers and course dates are available from each of the home nation Training Boards.
- 5.3 The training course is for potential leaders and assumes a basic competence as a hill walker. It emphasises those skills that a candidate might have difficulty learning without expert guidance.
- 5.4 At the end of the course the Course Director will complete the Training Course Report page in the logbook and will attach a numbered and dated sticker to the Endorsement Page. Candidates will be given advice on the additional skills and experience that they need to gain before attending an assessment. Attendance will be reported by the Course Director and added to the National Mountain Training Database.
- 5.5 Candidates registering on the WGL scheme who have already registered for ML and attended a ML training course are deemed to have received equivalent training. Such candidates do not need to apply for exemption from WGL training but will need to show that their walking experience encompasses terrain as defined in the scope of the scheme.

## **6 Consolidation Period**

- 6.1 Candidates are advised that under normal circumstances there will be a period of consolidation between training and assessment. This period is not defined by a length of time but should be sufficient for candidates to review the content of their training course and to feel confident of their ability to lead groups in the terrain defined by the scheme. All candidates must meet the assessment pre-requirements.
- 6.2 Every opportunity should be taken to practise the skills learned during training and this might include working under the guidance of a suitably experienced leader. It might also include practice in leading parties at an easier level such as in rural countryside outside defined mountain and moorland areas, if approved to do so by an employer or operating authority.
- 6.3 Prior to attending an assessment course candidates must have completed an absolute minimum of forty hill-walking days in three distinct areas of the UK and Ireland as defined by the scope of the scheme.

## **7 First Aid Requirements**

For any leader, first aid is an essential skill and the WGL assessment requires a current first aid qualification. The minimum requirement is that such a course must involve at least two full days or sixteen hours of training and include an element of assessment. Candidates are further expected to undertake such additional elements of first aid training as are consistent with their work in wild and remote country including emergency assistance and evacuation techniques. It is the responsibility of award holders and/or their employers to evaluate their likely work and the type of situations that they can reasonably expect to encounter and to maintain current appropriate first aid training and qualifications.

## **8 Assessment and Validation**

- 8.1 Assessment courses have at least thirty hours of contact time between candidates and assessors. Candidates are tested in accordance with the syllabus and should therefore ensure that they are familiar with all its aspects before attending the course. Home nation Training Boards approve assessment Providers. A Mountaineering Instructor Award holder (minimum requirement) directs courses with supporting staff holding at least the ML award. They will work at a maximum ratio of four candidates : one assessor with the Course Director having a practical involvement in each course. Lists of approved Providers and course dates are available from each of the home nation Training Boards.
- 8.2 The Course Director endorses the logbook with an assessment report page and makes appropriate recommendations. The assessment course report form is sent to the relevant Mountain Training Board office, where the result is verified and added to the National Mountain Training Database.



There are three possible results:

**Pass:** awarded where the candidate has demonstrated a proper knowledge and application of the syllabus and has shown the necessary experience and attributes for hill-walking leadership.

**Defer:** awarded when the candidate does not satisfy all the requirements of the syllabus. The assessor will complete the recommendations on the Assessment Course Report page (and on additional pages if necessary), explaining what extra training or experience may be required and the recommended format of the re-assessment.

**Fail:** awarded where the candidate's performance has not been at the appropriate standard or the necessary experience or attributes have not been shown. The assessor will complete the recommendations on the Assessment Course Report page (and on additional pages if necessary), explaining what extra training or experience is recommended before a further assessment.

8.3 In the case of a deferral, re-assessment candidates are encouraged to return to the original assessment Provider. However they have the option of being assessed by any approved assessment Provider. Practical re-assessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment and candidates may only take two re-assessments before having to take a further complete assessment. All re-assessments must be completed within five years.

## 9 Exemption from Training

9.1 After registration for the WGL Award scheme candidates who have substantial personal and leadership experience in hill-walking areas or who believe that they have attended equivalent training may apply for exemption from training. WGL registrants who have attended a ML training course do not need to apply for exemption. There is no exemption from assessment.

9.2 To apply for exemption, candidates must:

- be registered for the WGL Award scheme
- obtain and complete an exemption application form
- send the appropriate fee and a copy of their logbook experience pages to their home nation Training Board

Candidates should allow at least fifteen working days for this process to be completed.

## 10 Equal Opportunities

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

## 11 Complaints and Appeals Procedure

11.1 The WGL scheme is subject to continuous monitoring, culminating in a formal review once every four years. Candidates with feedback on their courses are encouraged to submit written comments to the Provider or to their Board.

- 11.2 If for any reason candidates find it necessary to complain about an aspect of their training or assessment then they should contact the Course Director or the relevant officer within Mountain Leader Training.
- 11.3 If candidates feel that aspects of their assessment were unfair they should:
- make contact with the course Provider, explain their concerns and seek clarification.
  - contact the Secretary of the Provider's Board for advice if this does not resolve their concerns.

Appeals must be lodged in writing within 60 days from the end of the assessment. The decision of the Board will be final.

## **12 Further Experience**

- 12.1 Award holders should follow the National Guidelines issued by MLTUK (see [www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)). In particular they should note that the award remains valid only where the holder is deployed within the remit of the award and the holder has recent logged experience appropriate to that award. The responsibility for ensuring that leaders receive refresher training must lie with the provider of the service, or the individual in the case of self-employed leaders.
- 12.2 A recommended way of obtaining relevant further training and keeping up to date with developments within the WGL and other awards is to become a member of MLTA, the Mountain Leader Training Association.
- 12.3 MLTA aims to provide good communication between leaders and the Mountain Leader Training Boards allowing members to keep up to date with current developments in mountain training. These are achieved by providing web-based communication and practical training events at venues around the UK and Ireland.
- 12.4 MLTA membership is available to anyone who is registered for any of the awards administered by Mountain Leader Training, i.e. WGL, ML(S), ML(W) and SPA, and who is also a member of one of the Mountaineering Councils.
- 12.5 MLTA membership can be obtained at the same time as joining any of the Mountaineering Councils of the UK and Ireland, when registering for any of the awards or online at [www.mlta.co.uk](http://www.mlta.co.uk).
- 12.6 In order to ensure the validity of the award, WGL holders must keep their first aid qualification up to date.



# Syllabus

Photo: Malcolm Creasey

There is a wide range of skills and knowledge that a walking group leader needs in order to operate effectively. Not only is it necessary to perform each element in isolation, it is also vital that leaders are able to combine several skills at any one time. For example they need to be able to manage the group and navigate simultaneously.

## 1 Technical Competence

Candidates must be technically competent before they can effectively lead others in the hills. They also require the ability to introduce others to simple skills such as hill-walking techniques.

### 1.1 Walking and Route Finding

It is essential that group leaders are competent walkers who possess the skills to do the following:

- a. demonstrate good practice with regard to individual skills: pace, conservation of energy, balance and co-ordination
- b. identify hazards and manage risk
- c. make good route choices with alterations appropriate to conditions
- d. interpret maps and evaluate terrain

### 1.2 Navigation

Competence as a navigator is a basic requirement for any walking group leader who should have the ability to choose from a wide range of techniques and select those that are appropriate to the conditions. These techniques include:

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

### 1.3 **Hazards and Emergency Procedures**

The ability to make sound judgements and to deal with a wide range of hazards when leading groups is an essential skill. This includes:

- a. recognition and avoidance of steep and broken ground
- b. recognition of water hazards, including marshes and streams, and the skills and safety procedures for dealing with them
- c. procedures in the event of an accident and how to bivouac in an emergency
- d. understanding the causes, signs, symptoms, prevention and treatment in the field of hypothermia, exposure, cold injuries and heat disorders in addition to the general first aid requirements of the scheme

### 1.4 **Equipment**

The equipment used by a group can have a critical impact on the success of any journey. Group leaders should have knowledge of the following:

- a. personal walking equipment
- b. additional equipment required by a leader
- c. packing and carrying personal and communal equipment

## **2 Group Management and The Responsibilities of the Group Leader**

### 2.1 **Responsibilities of the Leader**

Candidates must be conversant with the main areas of responsibility of the group leader, particularly for the care and safety of the group, as follows:

- a. general responsibilities to the group and, where appropriate, to parents/guardians, the organising authority, committee or manager of the activity, the outdoor user and the general public
- b. specific responsibilities to choose appropriate objectives, to complete detailed preparations and ensure that the group is adequately equipped and briefed for the activity
- c. current legislation and the legal responsibilities that relate to walking group leaders, including issues specific to supervising young people

### 2.2 **Group Management**

Candidates must be familiar with:

- a. operational responsibilities in the outdoors required to manage the group effectively and to meet the changing needs of the group and its individual members. Leaders should provide a safe and rewarding experience for each group member and be able to evaluate the experience and motivate towards further participation where appropriate.
- b. use and limitations of the techniques of indirect supervision of others undertaking an expedition in appropriate terrain

### 2.3 **The Overnight Experience**

Camping in remote locations is beyond the scope of this award, but candidates need to have practical familiarity with:

- a. the siting and pitching of tents and the safety procedures required when using various stoves
- b. selection, preparation and cooking of suitable foods
- c. group and personal hygiene

- d. the ability to undertake and manage a safe and comfortable overnight camp

In addition candidates should be aware of

- a. appropriate methods of group supervision
- b. the selection and booking of hostels, huts, and easily-accessible campsites

### 3 **The Upland Environment**

#### 3.1 **Access**

Walking group leaders should understand and be familiar with the following:

- a. the Countryside Code, associated codes and the responsibility to minimise impact on the environment
- b. current legislation concerning access to the countryside in upland areas, the nature of specially designated areas and limitations on their use
- c. how and where to get information about access to upland areas e.g. from appropriate guidebooks and maps, Mountaineering Council sources, local and National Access Forums and from the various countryside agencies

#### 3.2 **Conservation**

Walking group leaders should understand and be familiar with the following:

- a. the multiple uses of upland areas e.g. hill farming, forestry, water collection, grouse shooting, stalking and outdoor recreation
- b. issues relating to upland conservation and the long-term effects of human pressures on this environment
- c. the importance of human sanitation issues in the outdoors

#### 3.3 **Environmental Knowledge**

Walking group leaders should extend their knowledge about all aspects of the hill and moorland environment e.g. geology, geography, flora, fauna, local history and photography. They should have a basic knowledge of:

- a. the general impact of humans on upland environments
- b. the potential impact of outdoor recreation with particular reference to groups

#### 3.4 **Weather**

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

Candidates should also have an understanding of:

- a. sources of information on weather
- b. effects of weather on route selection and level of activity
- c. simple interpretation of weather maps

### 4 **Background Knowledge**

Candidates should have a basic understanding of

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

# Guidance notes for Candidates, Trainers and Assessors



Photo: Malcolm Creasey

## Introduction

These guidance notes are designed to assist both candidates and course staff on training and assessment courses by expanding on all aspects of the syllabus and giving ideas on how best to tackle a particular subject.

The success of any course, training or assessment, depends on the contributions made by all those involved. It is essential that candidates have an appropriate level of experience before they attend. Equally trainers and assessors should be active mountaineers who are up to date with current practice. There are often several solutions to a given task and the experience brought to a course by each person will contribute to the range of learning opportunities.



### Candidates

Candidates are required to have suitable experience as hill walkers so that they can grasp all aspects of the training and contribute fully to the course. Candidates should feel free to ask even the simplest questions since they are often the most pertinent. It can be helpful to keep notes during the course so that at a later date candidates are able to build on the skills learnt during the course.



### Trainers

Trainers should assist candidates to become more effective group leaders. Although trainers have a responsibility to work to the WGL 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 leadership need to be integrated holistically. Candidates should be given feedback and should leave the training course knowing what is required during their consolidation period. This may often take the form of a written action plan.



## **Assessors**

Assessors evaluate the performance of a candidate against the syllabus requirements and make a realistic and objective assessment against the nationally recognised standard. The assessment course should be conducted in a manner that gives all candidates the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability under suitably realistic 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 taking an holistic approach to the skills of leadership by limiting the time devoted to single techniques in isolation. Assessors must provide feedback to candidates at the end of each element.

# 1. Technical Competence



Photo: Malcolm Creasey

## 1.1 Walking and Route Finding

### Walking



#### Candidates

Candidates must be able to demonstrate the judgement required to identify terrain suitable for the leadership of groups within the scope of the WGL. Candidates should be able to move efficiently over this sort of terrain, while demonstrating the ability to be flexible when pace-setting, in order to take account of the varying abilities of the group members.



#### Trainers

Trainers should be able to ensure that candidates are fully aware of the different skills of movement over open ground and discuss and explore the various ways of passing on these techniques. Candidates need to be made aware of the importance of appropriate pace-setting and of the many different levels of fitness that may exist within a group of people.



#### Assessors

Assessors need to ensure that candidates can move efficiently and effectively over a variety of terrain and be able to pass on simple advice to assist the novice hill walker. Leaders need to show an awareness of the importance of pace and demonstrate strategies to deal with differing abilities within a group, setting a pace that is appropriate to the group, the terrain and the weather conditions.



## Route Planning and Route Finding



### Candidates

Candidates need to be able to plan a route appropriate for their group using map, compass and navigation skills. This planning should take into account group ability and aspiration, difficulty of terrain and weather forecast. Consideration should also be given to whether the journey planned will be under direct or indirect supervision.

Candidates should be able to identify potential hazards, alternative routes and possible escape routes. Candidates should be aware of different methods for estimating journey times and recording routes and be able to teach simple route planning to others.

Candidates need to be able to combine information from maps, guidebooks and other sources, along with their observations of the actual terrain in order to select safe and appropriate routes.



### Trainers

Trainers need to discuss the different considerations for group leaders such as age, special needs, aspiration, ability, group size, personal and group equipment, terrain and weather. Trainers should assist candidates to develop a framework for planning and recording routes as well as assessing risks prior to undertaking a journey.

Trainers need to help candidates interpret information from maps and guidebooks. They should encourage candidates to combine this knowledge with observed topographical features to make efficient route choices.

Trainers need to make candidates aware of the implications and potentially serious nature of supervising unaccompanied groups. They should ensure that candidates are aware that a carefully structured and progressive approach is essential when preparing groups for unaccompanied journeys. Trainers should share ideas and methods that may be used to supervise these types of groups including shadowing, phones/radios and meeting points. The need for careful preparation and planning must be emphasised.



### Assessors

Assessors need to ensure that candidates can plan and record an appropriate route, taking into account the group and the prevailing conditions. Planning skills may initially be assessed with a home or evening paper, but leaders must also be able to demonstrate that they can follow a chosen route. They must also show that they can adapt their route according to group needs and conditions.

## 1.2 Navigation



### Candidates

Navigation is a fundamental skill for the walking group leader and a key element in a leader's ability to maintain a flexible approach and to react to changing conditions. A leader should be able to navigate efficiently, accurately and confidently, while simultaneously looking after the group, avoiding hazards and making the journey interesting. Candidates should also be

aware of methods that they might use to introduce the basic skills of navigation to others.

When preparing for the award candidates should attempt to gain as much experience as possible in navigating across unfamiliar non-mountainous upland terrain. Practice in a variety of terrain and conditions builds the skill required to select an appropriate itinerary and to follow that route on the ground. Candidates should be aware that moorland terrain is quite different from mountainous terrain and can require the use of different navigational techniques and strategies.

Navigation involves a range of skills as outlined in the syllabus. Rarely will all of these skills be required on any single navigation leg. Therefore a large part of the skill of the navigator is the choice of appropriate and efficient techniques. For example, walking on a bearing in good visibility while on a defined terrain feature would be inappropriate; orientation of map to ground would be the more suitable technique. Conversely, trying to use the map alone across a featureless plateau in poor visibility may easily cause the leader to become disoriented and here the technique of walking on a bearing and using timing and/or pacing to estimate distance would be more appropriate. The efficient navigator will adapt the navigation techniques to the terrain, the prevailing conditions and the group. The wider and more varied their hill-walking experience, the better equipped the candidates will be to make these decisions.

Orienteering is a useful and accessible form of micro-navigation training that tends to focus on map to ground interpretation but candidates must bear in mind that the navigation skills developed in such events may differ in emphasis from those required when walking in wild upland terrain.



## **Trainers**

Whilst candidates on training courses will be expected to be reasonably proficient navigators this may not always be the case. Many experienced hill 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 on a training course is beneficial. This may well be revision for some but could also be used as a model for the candidate who is in the 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. Trainers should also discuss how these basic skills of navigation might be introduced to others.

Maps of different types and scale should be available for use during the course. Candidates should be encouraged to pay continuous attention to the terrain and to try out different techniques, evaluating their suitability to a variety of situations. Night navigation is often used as a training opportunity when no poor-visibility navigation has been possible during daylight hours. Trainers may wish to include night navigation even if poor visibility has been encountered, as it is not unusual to be walking off the hill in poor light. It should be remembered that on a clear night navigation might be no more difficult than in daylight, whereas a combination of darkness and poor conditions may be extremely taxing.

The use and limitations of navigation aids such as global positioning systems (GPS) and

altimeters should be discussed. It may be useful for trainers to demonstrate practically their use as an aid to navigation.

Navigation should be presented in a structured form so that the candidates can progress throughout the training course. The candidates should finish the course being aware of the level of navigation ability required by a walking group leader and how to progress to achieve this.



## **Assessors**

The assessor should structure the tasks assigned to candidates in order to ensure that all relevant navigation techniques are seen. Navigation will be assessed throughout the course so assessors may be able to settle candidates' nerves by initially setting simple navigation tasks. Clear communication is required in order to avoid any misunderstanding about the task to be performed and what is expected of them. Candidates should have the opportunity to ask for clarification if necessary. The other candidates must also be briefed on their roles during any assessment task.

Candidates should be given reasonable time to demonstrate their navigational ability to the assessor. They should be allowed to complete any task to the best of their ability and not be pressured into making quick decisions and mistakes, although the over-all time taken for any task must be taken into account. Candidates should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to adopt the appropriate technique for the situation. Assessors should avoid prescribing specific techniques to be used by candidates, allowing the candidates to choose and perform their own solution to the task. The assessor should look at the task set from the viewpoint of someone who is 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 time. In all cases the elements of party management and group leadership should not be neglected.

Visibility will obviously influence the type of navigation tasks set, as assessors must satisfy themselves that candidates can navigate efficiently in the full range of weather conditions. When the visibility is good, more accurate navigation can be expected. At these times night navigation may well be required although even 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 reasonable time to resolve the situation. The ability to identify and correct an error is both an essential skill for a group leader and an informative process for an assessor. Candidates should be able to navigate with map and compass alone; a variety of map scales should be used during the course. If candidates choose to carry navigation aids such as GPS, altimeter or other similar equipment, their ability to use them may be examined and could be used as an additional training element for others. However the candidate should also be able to navigate by more traditional methods alone.

Assessors should also discuss how the basic skills of navigation might be introduced to others.

## 1.3 Hazards and Emergency Procedures

There are a number of distinct types of hazard that might be encountered when walking in the hills. These include steep ground, marshes and streams, high winds and extreme weather conditions. These are best considered separately, although avoiding or dealing with them may involve many of the same principles.

A hazard need not imply that there is immediate danger to the individual or group, rather that there is a potential threat that needs to be managed by the group leader. Depending upon the terrain, the prevailing weather conditions and the experience of the group, the potential severity of any hazard will lie on a progressive scale. A simple stumble for an experienced walker on flat ground has far less 'emergency potential' than a stumble happening to an inexperienced walker on steep, wet ground. A leader should be able to react to all these variables in a manner that safeguards the interests of those in their charge. It is possible that a group may encounter another party that has experienced difficulties, so a leader should be thoroughly prepared to deal with a variety of situations, while keeping the needs of their own group paramount.

### Hazards Of Steep Ground And Cliff Edges



#### Candidates

There is a clear need for walking group leaders to be able to identify and avoid steep ground and cliff edges. Steep ground in this context is either broken, vegetated slopes possibly with a proportion of visible rock, well-defined outcrops or very steep, unbroken vegetated slopes. Some moorland areas have steep escarpments; these must be avoided when planning routes. It is an assumption within the definition of moorland areas that these hazardous features can be easily avoided by walking around them.

The use of the rope is beyond the scope of the award. A walking group leader should not take groups into terrain where use of a rope might be required.



#### Trainers

Trainers should ensure that candidates are taken to areas where they can develop the judgement and skills required to lead a group around outcrops. It is important that this training is done within the context of the terrain definition of the WGL which should be clearly explained.

It may be beneficial to examine difficult terrain intentionally to give candidates an understanding of the potential threat of steep ground, but this must be done with caution, and the terrain limitations must be clearly explained to candidates.



#### Assessors

When assessing this aspect of the syllabus the assessor should examine the judgement and skills of a candidate in identifying and avoiding this type of terrain. 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. Management skills such as positioning of the group in relation to the leader and the various forms of un-roped

assistance to members of the party are valuable to a potential leader and should be examined.

While it may be beneficial to enter areas near the limit of the award's remit intentionally to test the judgement of candidates, attention should be given to hazard avoidance through sound preparation and understanding. Candidates must have a clear understanding of where and on what terrain they can operate in future.

## **Environmental and Water Hazards**



### **Candidates**

Candidates should have an awareness of the major environmental hazards and know how to avoid or deal with them. These include flooding, lightning, high winds and unstable ground surfaces. These hazards can best be managed through careful planning and observation.

Candidates may have encountered a limited range of water hazards such as stream crossings and dealing with bogs and marshes. The potentially serious nature of other water hazards such as rivers and fast-flowing streams cannot be overemphasised. The severity of water hazards can seldom be separated from the prevailing weather conditions. Candidates must show by way of good route choice, interpretation of likely weather conditions and leadership that they can avoid these hazards. Candidates are not expected to enter rivers or fast flowing streams under any circumstances.



### **Trainers**

This aspect of the syllabus can be introduced in a lecture or tutorial session and can then be referred to at any suitable point during the training course. The emphasis at training should be on assisting candidates to make judgements through sound preparation and understanding, both at the planning stage and also when undertaking a journey, as to the appropriateness of route choice with respect to hazards. It may be beneficial for candidates to be given practical guidance or have indicated to them areas, either on the map or the ground, that may be considered beyond the remit of the scheme, and why. The emphasis should be on the identification of these hazards rather than the candidates experiencing them during the course.

Water hazards encompass a number of elements such as dealing with bogs, marshes, streams and rivers. Training should be a combination of theoretical and practical work with the emphasis firmly on avoiding water hazards, especially river crossings. It should be emphasised that the risks associated with these hazards are not simply the immediate ones but also the potential long-term effects of wet and cold on the party.



### **Assessors**

The candidates' understanding of environmental hazards can be examined by means of written questions, informal discussion and by practical demonstrations, especially when relevant situations arise. Attention should be given to hazard avoidance through preparation and sensible route choice.

## Emergency Procedures



### Candidates

Emergency situations may develop from accidents or from errors of judgement. Leaders will experience extra pressures when something goes wrong. Therefore they should be clear as to the most suitable response for any given emergency on a journey. It is important that a balanced understanding of what constitutes an emergency is developed. A well-equipped, fit party being delayed for a few hours may create logistic problems but rarely constitutes an emergency whereas a badly-broken leg should be treated as an emergency under any circumstances.



### Trainers

Accident and emergency procedures should be covered in detail. Candidates should be made aware of methods of calling for assistance and the expected time scale of such assistance. Improvised rescue techniques should also be covered so that candidates are able to manage a minor evacuation if necessary. The skills essential for spending an unplanned night out with a group on a moor or fell should also be covered.



### Assessors

Emergency procedures can be assessed by a combination of written/oral examination and practical work. Assessors should accept that there might be more than one acceptable solution to a problem. This area lends itself to discussion, particularly in groups, when differences of opinion may arise and can be debated 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.

## 1.4 Equipment

The use of appropriate equipment can greatly increase the overall safety and enjoyment for a group. It is likely that all candidates, trainers and assessors will be aware that a huge variety of equipment is currently available. When it comes to deciding what is 'appropriate', there is a multitude of choices, so an awareness of the advantage and limitations of various design features is important.



### Candidates

Candidates should be able to demonstrate the suitability of their own equipment and clothing, particularly for use in adverse weather. They should be able to choose, carry and use the appropriate personal equipment for the prevailing conditions. They should also have an understanding of a range of currently-available equipment and be able to advise others on its suitability. It is important that candidates can identify the minimum equipment requirements for a group.



## **Trainers**

It is important to spend some time examining and discussing equipment needs with candidates. Candidates should be aware that their personal and group 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. Many candidates will not have leadership experience and so 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.



## **Assessors**

An assessment course provides many opportunities to examine the suitability of each candidate's personal equipment with regard to safety, comfort and efficiency, allowing for personal opinion. Assessors should bear in mind that candidates need to be able to operate as party leaders in poor conditions and their 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.

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## 2. Group Management and the Responsibilities of the Walking Group Leader



Photo: Malcolm Creasey

The success or otherwise of a day in the hills with a group depends on a number of factors. The common thread linking these factors is the input and influence of the group leader. Candidates should be aware of various styles of leadership applicable to particular situations. During training and assessment, emphasis will be placed on the importance of being able to make the judgements necessary for leading groups safely and effectively in a manner that enables the group to be involved and informed.

People considering leading others, particularly young people outdoors, need to be aware of their legal responsibilities. Leaders have a clear duty of care to their groups, the level of which will vary according to the members' age and experience. They owe a greater duty of care when leaders are acting in *loco parentis* with people under eighteen years of age. Parents and young participants should be made aware that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities not without risks and dangers. Parents and participants in these activities should be made aware of and accept these risks.

Moorland and hills present hazards that may not be apparent to novices, so adult group members must be made aware of some level of risk from briefings by the leader. Leaders need to understand that they could be deemed to be acting negligently if operating in inappropriate terrain relative to their group's ability and their own experience.

The use of valley and other accessible bases for overnight stays such as campsites, hostels and huts is included in the scheme and should be covered. The campsites used may be either formal, organised sites with facilities provided or 'non-formal' sites that have no facilities provided and may well be on open land remote from habitation but still easily accessible such as by roads and tracks usable by appropriate vehicles.

Basic camping skills should be covered practically and include the siting and pitching of tents and the appropriate safety procedures for using a variety of stoves. These should be kept to general principles to allow for the wide range of available equipment.

Camping in remote sites, i.e. a non-formal site that cannot be easily accessed by vehicle to



within a short walk of the site is outside the scope of the syllabus. Candidates should not normally have to 'backpack' their equipment to a site as part of their WGL training and assessment, but if a Course Director chooses this option candidates must be given adequate prior notice.



## Candidates

It is possible that many people will have their first hill-walking experience under the leadership of a walking group leader. The approach taken by the leader will have a major bearing on their future involvement in the activity. Candidates should be aware that leadership and group management involve more than briefing a group and adopting a 'follow-the-leader' approach to a walk. Candidates should be aware of their own particular style of leadership and should be able to adapt and change to suit different situations.

It is important to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different individuals in a group and to plan and provide a day accordingly. As the candidate's own experience develops, it becomes easier to set appropriate targets and goals for group members. Candidates will increasingly become aware of assessing the risks associated with each route, group and day on the hills. They should also be aware that it might be better to underestimate the abilities of individuals in the group rather than to attempt too challenging an outing. Candidates must also ensure that when planning a walk they cover all aspects of preparation, such as equipment for themselves and the group, the planned route and the weather.

Candidates should try to gain leadership experience in a variety of circumstances, with different groups, weather conditions and locations. This may be gained by working under the supervision of a suitably-qualified leader, under the approval of an employer or organisation, or simply by being the most experienced member in a group of friends. Leadership experience can only be gained by working with others.

Everyone should be aware of dangers and potential hazards. Dealing with them through a process of risk assessment is a fundamental skill of a walking group leader. This level of judgement can only be developed through personal experience. While risk assessments may be a formal process within many organisations, when planning any outing it is essential that everyone appreciates that risk assessment is an ongoing process when outdoors.

Candidates should have the skills to lead and supervise groups for more than a single day and they should be able to operate from valley bases such as hostels or campsites. Candidates should also be competent to manage and supervise groups that are camped at sheltered sites that have easy access to roads or a refuge. On WGL courses the pitching of tents and use of a variety of stoves will be covered practically and candidates are expected to gain personal experience of camping in a variety of formal and informal sites.



## Trainers

Group management and the responsibilities of the Walking Group Leader are important aspects of the syllabus. There are practical and theoretical aspects of the syllabus that need to be covered and trainers should consider incorporating much of the training into practical sessions on the hill.

Trainers should place emphasis on the importance of assessing a group's ability when planning a walk, as many problems may be anticipated at this point. Candidates must be

made aware of the importance of assessing the needs of a group as well as individual strengths and weaknesses within the group, as this is a vital aspect of the planning process. Trainers should discuss with candidates how best to carry out initial preparations such as planning routes, obtaining weather forecasts and completing parental consent forms. Trainers should discuss with candidates the importance of carrying out risk assessments and for calling for outside assistance in the event of an emergency.

Trainers should discuss with candidates some of the issues such as child protection associated with working with groups of young people or vulnerable adults to introduce basic concepts of good practice in those leadership situations. Candidates should also be made aware of the need to conform to organisational codes of practice such as equity and equal opportunities when working with groups and with employing authorities.

Poor weather or darkness might provide some of the best opportunities for candidates to role-play as group leaders. Candidates' walking speed and confidence can vary in this situation, reflecting variations normally found in a hill-walking group.

A training course provides candidates with an ideal opportunity to observe and use a variety of leadership styles and to discuss the appropriateness of each in different situations. Opportunities should also be provided for analysing different situations as they occur during practical sessions as well as review exercises that involve an element of leadership.

Trainers should discuss with candidates different methods of risk assessment that may be used during the planning stage and possible ways of documenting action plans. It is also important that trainers develop candidates' skills in making risk assessments while leading groups and the judgements necessary to manage the identified risk. For many candidates this process may be subconscious so it is valuable to discuss and illustrate the processes during practical training sessions.

Camping within the scope of the WGL scheme takes place in terrain that is normally sheltered and within easy walking distance of roads or habitation. Camping away from formal, organised sites has the potential to affect the locality adversely by vegetation trampling and pollution through food and human waste. It therefore needs to be undertaken with sensitivity combining care for the environment with personal enjoyment.

While 'remote' camping is outside the scope of the syllabus the use of a variety of valley and accessible bases as outlined should be covered practically. This should include appropriate procedures for the siting and pitching of tents and the safe use of a variety of stoves. As noted, these should be kept to general principles to allow for the wide range of potentially available equipment. Candidates may be encouraged to use their own equipment to increase the range available.

Trainers should cover the basic principles of organising groups when using a variety of accommodation. Group and personal hygiene in relation to camping, cooking and day walks should be discussed. Techniques and equipment for enhancing the comfort and safety of overnight camps should also be addressed.

It is extremely important that candidates are informed in advance of arrangements if a practical overnight camp is programmed for training these issues.



## Assessors

Assessors should examine the candidate's ability to plan journeys and carry out simple risk assessments. During the assessment a variety of techniques may be used, from simple emergency scenarios on the hill to the use of a written paper for home or evening completion.

Candidates' understanding of different styles of leadership should be assessed. Candidates should be able to identify the style they are most comfortable with and be able to make judgements as to when a change of style might be appropriate whilst leading a group. Assessors should give candidates opportunities to show understanding of the issues surrounding effective management in a variety of hill-walking situations.

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

It is difficult to provide genuine leadership situations on assessment. Groups of assessment candidates are not likely to react like a novice party, yet it should be emphasised that assumptions should not be made as to the levels of individual competence in the party. Assessors should be clear as to which aspects of leadership they can realistically 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 own strengths and limitations.

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

Assessors will examine the candidate's ability to identify and manage potential risks when planning a route. Also candidates must be aware of the differences between various hazards and know how to deal with them appropriately when operating with groups.

The ability to undertake overnight camps personally in comfort and safety as well as the ability to supervise and manage groups in 'formal' or 'non-formal' campsites should be evaluated by the assessor. Many walking group leaders will be employed in the management of groups undertaking camping expeditions or on campsite- or hostel-based trips and the assessor needs to be assured that the approach of the candidate to this area of the syllabus is informed and practical.

Leadership in this context may well extend to the ability to train others in basic campcraft and safety, particularly in regard to the use of stoves for cooking.

The overall management of the overnight experience may also be assessed by theory paper or discussion.

It is extremely important that candidates are informed in advance of arrangements for assessing these issues if a practical overnight camp is to be contemplated. This should only be done by prior agreement with all candidates in the group.

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## 3. *The Upland Environment*



Photo: Malcolm Creasey

The walking group leader should have a basic knowledge of the upland environment and an understanding of the implications of the impact of individuals and groups. Valuable background knowledge could include such subjects as flora, fauna, geology, geography, local history, weather and sanitation. The walking group leader should be able to use their environmental knowledge to instil a wider appreciation of the environment within their group and thereby enhance the walk.

Candidates should be familiar with and follow the Countryside Code, associated codes and published good practice guidelines and should minimise impact on the upland environment. They must appreciate and take account of the issues associated with conservation and multiple land use in upland, moorland and hill country. These may include farming, forestry, water collection, fishing, grouse shooting, stalking, bird watching and other related activities.

The walking group leader should be familiar with current access legislation and how it affects walking in upland and other specially-designated areas. They should be familiar with any access arrangements or restrictions in their local area and know where to find out about access information for other parts of the country. They should be familiar with the various sources of information available from the Mountaineering Councils, countryside and conservation bodies, guidebooks, maps and other publications that are available to inform and educate those using the upland environment.



### **Candidates**

Candidates may have initially only limited understanding of the upland environment and the impact of walking in upland, moorland and hill areas. However, they should understand that a development of this knowledge forms a foundation for greater enjoyment of both the

environment and the award as well as an appreciation of ways of minimising impact. With this knowledge will come a greater appreciation of the various conflicts of interest that can occur between walkers and other users of the countryside. This will also allow candidates to enhance their own and their groups' enjoyment of a walk, help promote greater understanding of the needs of other users and reduce potential conflict.

Not all candidates will necessarily have an interest in every aspect of the environment. However, each should endeavour to develop some expertise in topics such as flora, fauna, geology, geography or local history and have a broad appreciation of the other areas of interest. The candidate should also know where to find sources of information on these various aspects of the environment.

The Countryside Code and associated codes are designed to minimise the impact of recreational use on the environment and rural communities. These should be familiar to all candidates as they provide a model for good practice.



### **Trainers**

The environment, access and conservation are important issues for the walking group leader and these should be integrated into the training. Discussion sessions and evaluation should take place when appropriate examples and situations arise. There will always be opportunities for candidates to be introduced to a wider range of interests and made aware of the extra dimension that these can bring to any outing. Consideration of the environmental impact of the candidate and group activities is a useful exercise. Discussion about the impact of the training course itself may be a valuable starting point. The susceptibility of the environment to damage and pollution by inappropriate and inconsiderate use should be highlighted, especially when related to higher altitudes and associated severe weather.

Trainers must be knowledgeable about current access legislation as it affects the countryside in general and upland areas in particular. Candidates should be informed as to where to find out about access agreements or restrictions for any area that they may be visiting. The implications of specially designated areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and in Northern Ireland Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) and the potential impact on them by recreational users should be outlined. The best ways to deal with the problems of human sanitation in the outdoor environment should also be covered.



### **Assessors**

This aspect of the syllabus can be investigated through written papers, examination and discussion of logbook experience, and by questioning throughout the course. Issues surrounding questions of access, conservation and group management are fundamental to the appropriate use of the countryside. Assessors should be prepared to defer candidates if they feel that they demonstrate a serious lack of awareness of the importance of access, the environment and conservation. 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.

Knowledge of the various sources of current information is vital in planning any walk and this should be investigated during the assessment. Assessors should be able to offer further training where it is appropriate.

## 4. Background Knowledge



Photo: Malcolm Creasey



### Candidates

Candidates should be able to assist novices to take part in hill-walking activities. They should know about hill-walking clubs and organisations and have access to relevant literature. A leader should have some knowledge of how hill walking fits into the larger picture of mountaineering with its long-established ethics and traditions. An understanding of where to obtain information on access, conservation and other related topics is important. Magazines, papers and other publications, and internet sources are useful ways of keeping abreast of current developments in a wide range of syllabus areas.



### Trainers

Trainers should introduce candidates to a variety of resources to enable them to expand their understanding of hill-walking and related topics. They should also introduce candidates to the role of the Mountaineering Councils and the Mountain Training Boards and how they work with other agencies that have interests in the upland areas of the UK and Ireland. This can be achieved through lectures and by an integrated approach throughout the course.



### Assessors

The candidate's overall knowledge of hill walking and its traditions, clubs and organisations, books and magazines, the upland environment and roles of national bodies should be investigated. This can be achieved through home papers, discussion or written papers.

# Appendices



Photo: Allen Fyffe

## Appendix I

### Suitable Terrain for the WGL

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

Suitable terrain for the WGL meets the following criteria:

**'Open, uncultivated, non-mountainous high or remote country known variously as upland, moor, bog, fell, hill or down'**

Note on terminology: there is no one single term that adequately defines the ground covered by the WGL award. The Oxford English Dictionary definition of hill as "natural elevation of the earth's surface, a small mountain" does not in itself preclude a hill from being steep and rocky in character. Indeed it is important to appreciate that these terms can be applied differently in different parts of the British Isles or in different contexts. Thus in Scotland "the hill" usually refers to more mountainous country while in Ireland there are many lower lying, rounded hills that are named "mountain". A walker may use "uplands" to refer to rolling as opposed to mountainous country, whereas the botanist or ecologist may use it to include the latter. Leaders should be aware of these variations in meaning and not allow names to prevent a more objective assessment of whether a particular piece of terrain falls within the remit of the award.

**Areas enclosed by well-defined geographical or man-made boundaries such as roads (areas that border mountain regions and do not have well defined boundaries are excluded)**

Some boundaries such as walls, fences, forest plantations and water features may change over the years. Walking group leaders must be certain that any feature that bounds their area in which they are walking is reliable.

**Areas of remoteness that are exited by the group in a few hours, returning to a refuge or an accessible road**

Walking group leaders and the groups in their charge would normally be able to exit from their chosen route within about three hours at the group's walking pace. An accessible road could be considered as one that can be used by a standard ambulance and a refuge is a place which can provide shelter and from where help can be summoned, such as a building with a telephone.

**Areas where movement on steep or rocky terrain is not required (in either a planned or unplanned situation)**

Walking group leaders are trained and assessed by specialised trainers approved by the home nation Training Boards. The training and assessment courses are carried out in areas that provide good examples of suitable terrain. Anyone who is uncertain about the suitability of a chosen venue should contact the appropriate Training Board



## Appendix 2

### Definition of a Hill-walking Day as Applied to the Walking Group Leader Award

The quality hill-walking days are the cornerstone of a prospective leader's experience. Many factors such as the weather, the nature of the ground, the terrain and the physical and mental challenges will affect the experience and knowledge gained on such days. It is the combination of all these factors which makes a positive contribution towards a person's development and maturity as an all-round leader of walking groups.

For a walk to make a positive contribution to the experience of the prospective walking group leader usually some or all of the following criteria would be fulfilled:

- the individual takes part in the planning and leadership
- navigation skills are required
- experience must be in terrain appropriate to the scheme, although other mountain-walking experience is also extremely valuable and may contribute to the total number of days required for training and assessment
- knowledge is increased and skills practised
- attention is paid to safety
- the journey time is four hours or more
- adverse weather conditions may be encountered

Known and repeated walks in similar terrain and weather conditions are unlikely to make the same contribution to a person's hill-walking experience as those involving an element of exploration. Likewise, walks as a group member being led or on a course are unlikely to fulfil the above criteria. Wide experience as a hill walker in several different regions, in varying weather conditions, is a key element to becoming an effective walking group leader.

## Appendix 3

### Links Between WGL, ML and Locally Accredited Schemes

Candidates who wish to enter the Walking Group Leader scheme should follow the process described in the Prospectus. The award is available to anyone who wishes to lead groups, whether as part of an organisation that has a system for managing its leaders or as an individual operating independently. The WGL scheme develops the competence of individuals but may also assist leaders to identify organisations and individuals who can support their activities and, where necessary, provide advice and assistance.

A large number of WGL candidates may be involved with various youth organisations and may have received some form of training and validation prior to attending a WGL course. Mountain Leader Training wishes to support and endorse this local training where appropriate. The home nation Training Boards have developed criteria for the approval of local, site-specific or organisation-specific schemes and have granted approval to a number of such schemes. In each case the applicant has defined the scope of the scheme, its aims, design and management. From the Boards' point of view a critical element in any scheme is its access to a safety-management structure, quality and standardisation procedures and to technically-competent advice. Suitably experienced and approved Mountaineering Instructors are qualified to deliver ML and WGL courses and may therefore be able to provide a local scheme with suitably-designed standards for its leaders. For further details of the Boards' model for local schemes contact the relevant Board (see Appendix 8).

Candidates of the Walking Group Leader, Mountain Leader or local, site- or organisational-specific training schemes will often progress from scheme to scheme. Below is a summary of the links between schemes:

**Leaders within local, site-specific or organisation-specific schemes who wish to progress to WGL or ML.** Irrespective of other registrations candidates entering the WGL or ML schemes must register with that scheme. If their training Provider has both local accreditation and ML or WGL approval then they may have gained approval from their Board to deliver some form of tailored ML/WGL training based on the existing local scheme. Candidates who believe that their local training and personal walking experience have prepared them adequately for WGL or ML assessment may apply for exemption from training.

**ML registrants or trainees who wish to gain the WGL.** Irrespective of other registrations all candidates must register on the WGL scheme. If candidates have also registered on the ML scheme and attended a ML training course, once they have registered with WGL and fulfilled the experience requirements for that scheme they may proceed directly to WGL assessment. The ML training course can in effect be considered as a WGL training course for the purpose of progression through this scheme.

**WGL candidates who wish to progress through the ML scheme.** Irrespective of other registrations all candidates must register on the ML scheme. Candidates who have attended a WGL training course and have appropriate experience have two options. They should either attend a ML training course or apply for exemption from training. In the latter case they would need to illustrate the range of their experience and explain how this and the WGL training course have enabled them to prepare for ML assessment. For exemption to be granted

candidates have to meet the experience requirements necessary to attend a ML assessment course. It may be possible for WGL award holders to have their award recognised as part of the ML training process and so attend a shortened ML training course which will cover those areas specific to the ML scheme. This shortened course would normally be run over three or four days.

From these options it is clear that candidates are well advised to select the appropriate scheme for their needs. While considerable efforts have been made to enable cross-recognition of training elements, the most efficient option is to complete one scheme at a time. Candidates and their employers are encouraged to seek advice from the Boards if they require further clarification.

MLTUK has developed a document entitled National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders which was published in 2005 and is available on its website ([www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)). The primary aim of this document is to clarify how leader training and accreditation at every level, locally or nationally, for either volunteers or professionals, may be delivered and managed. It is hoped that this inclusive approach will enable organisations that currently operate outside the MLTUK awards to gain recognition for the quality standards that they set.

## Appendix 4

### Ethic of Care and Risk Assessment

While Mountain Leader Training is primarily concerned with technical competence, it recognises the need to ensure that all who are responsible for supply and delivery of activities take account of the welfare of the people in their care.

From records of incidents and accidents it seems evident that many of these could and should have been avoided. Most accidents occur as a direct result of poor planning and management and an inadequate assessment of the risks involved. One of the primary reasons for such incidents is the failure to assess objectively the needs of the individual participant in relation to the activity, choice of venue and prevailing conditions.

In order to improve this aspect, it is strongly recommended that the following principles be adopted during the planning process.

- Why?** Identify the reasons for undertaking an activity.
- Who?** Identify the group's needs taking into account experience, age, ability, interest, desired outcomes and specific needs of individuals within the group.
- What?** Identify the type of activity and level of participation consistent with the established needs of the participants.
- Where?** Identify and use appropriate venues and routes that are suited to the established needs of the participants.
- When?** Identify the appropriate time or occasion and maintain a degree of flexibility of operation with regard to prevailing conditions, available equipment, established needs and abilities of the participants.
- How?** After considering all of the above and before making final arrangements consideration should be given in detail to the way in which the activity is to be organised and executed, so that the aims of the activity can be achieved and potential hazards identified and dealt with appropriately. Alternative routes or activities should be planned should circumstances dictate an abandonment of the primary objective.

Challenge and adventure are never free of risk. Having regard for the safety and welfare of oneself and others is an aspect of participants' personal development. Good instruction and leadership will make an important contribution to this. (However, there must always be an acceptable framework of safety in place.)

Awareness of danger and potential hazard is developed through experience. Leaders need to be able to anticipate the possible risks involved in using particular environments. Risks will be minimised if leaders are familiar with members of their group, their strengths, weaknesses, personalities, and previous experience. It should also be understood that risk assessment is a continuous process not simply undertaken prior to the activity but continuously revised by the leader throughout the activity.

## Appendix 5

### WGL Training and Assessment Course Programmes

#### Training Courses

The design of a training-course programme should be based on training a group of candidates in the more challenging elements of the WGL syllabus. The course should provide opportunities to consolidate and build on the skills candidates already possess. The programme should reflect the dual responsibility of the trainer to the needs of the candidates and to the requirements of the syllabus.

All courses require approval by a home nation Training Board and will be delivered through a flexible programme that has a minimum of thirty hours of contact time between the candidates and training staff. Candidates are encouraged to seek out a course format that best suits their needs.

Providers may develop a variety of programmes. These might be delivered in the following formats:

- a continuous course over a three- to four-day period
- a number of weekends
- a series of days and a weekend
- a series of evenings and a block of time i.e. a weekend

Trainers should bear in mind the value of the residential experience, enabling more intensive concentration on the issues being trained and the ability to learn from interaction within a peer group. This should also be balanced against the fact that a split course over a series of weekends allows candidates to consolidate skills and prepare more fully for each subsequent weekend during the intervening periods; this may fit better with the demands of work time.

Courses must be delivered in areas that fall within the terrain definition for the award. During the training course many candidates may be venturing off paths and away from familiar terrain for the first time and trainers should ensure that this opportunity to illustrate the full potential of the terrain is not wasted. In essence, the majority of a training course should take place in context as part of realistic journeys, rather than as a series of short set-piece technical sessions.

Courses should be predominantly practical, with candidates provided with every opportunity to explore new skills and discuss relevant topics whilst outdoors. Theoretical topics should be delivered in an environment conducive to learning. If using shared or self-catering accommodation Providers should ensure that the domestic arrangements do not impinge on course delivery and contact time with students.

It is up to each Provider to combine the elements of the syllabus in a way that suits the particular circumstances of the course: the nature of the group, the valley base, length of day and prevailing weather conditions.

Although the emphasis will be on practical training, a training programme should include time for planning and reviewing activities. These are essential elements of the 'plan-do-review' cycle without which much of the value of the training may be lost.

As the training course represents only a fraction of the time a candidate will spend developing their skills and experience, trainers should assist candidates in recognising their own learning needs. Feedback should be given when and where appropriate. This may take the form of daily reviews or the provision of a personal training log to assist each candidate in making realistic assessments of their own strengths and weaknesses, thereby identifying what additional experience they might need.

The cycle of activity on a typical WGL training course day is illustrated below:

### **Morning**

- weather check - weather forecast reviewed and interpreted by training staff and made available throughout the course to show the changing pattern as it evolves
- session introduction, environmental audit of the day – travel, parking, access, other users, physical impact
- equipment issue and final packing

### **Daytime**

- training session – which should ensure that the techniques being covered are in context and refer to relevant syllabus areas. Whilst there may well be emphasis on specific syllabus areas such as navigation or the environment there should also be training that demonstrates the holistic nature of leadership.
- end of session - travel, review and unwind

### **Evening**

- practical and/or theoretical training sessions focusing on specific elements of the syllabus, such as weather, which may benefit from a classroom session
- briefing for next session as appropriate

## **Assessment Courses**

The design of an assessment course programme should allow candidates enough time to demonstrate to the assessors that they have attained the required level of competence in each of the elements of the WGL syllabus, without experiencing undue pressure. Candidates should demonstrate that they are able to lead groups in a variety of appropriate terrain in all weather conditions.

Assessment course programmes can take a number of forms. Each Provider should combine the elements of the syllabus to suit the particular circumstances of the course, such as the valley base, length of day and prevailing weather conditions.

All courses require approval from a home nation Training Board and will comprise a minimum of thirty hours contact time between assessment staff and candidates, the majority of which will be dedicated to practical activity.

Providers may develop a variety of programmes. These might be delivered in the following formats:

- a continuous course over a three-or four-day period
- a series of blocks of time e.g. two weekends

The assessment must take place in terrain that falls within the definition of the WGL scheme

and that is sufficiently challenging to the candidates. As far as possible an holistic approach to the syllabus should be taken with opportunities to assess different syllabus topics during a hill-walking journey.

Assessment tasks should be progressive and allow the candidate to settle into the assessment pattern. It is suggested that the practical assessment could begin with navigation in a relatively straightforward area rather than immediately moving into more complex ground.

Assessors may use home papers and research tasks as a method of gaining an insight into a candidate's breadth of knowledge. These may form the basis for additional questioning during the assessment process. Candidates may also be asked to make relevant presentations to the group or undertake appropriate test papers during the assessment course. These will normally be diagnostic and allow the assessors to structure the assessment process in a way relevant to the candidates rather than constituting a 'pass/fail' element of the course.

Assessors should keep a written record of candidates' performances during each day and review any notes at the end of each day. Assessors should also be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate's logbook, written papers and any areas that require follow-up actions during the assessment.

The cycle of activity on a typical WGL assessment day is illustrated below:

### **Morning**

- weather check – delegated to candidates, made available throughout the course to show the changing pattern as it evolves
- session and venue briefing – allow for questions
- environmental audit of the day – travel, parking, access, other users, physical impact

### **Daytime**

- assessment session – ensure that the techniques are in context - refer to leadership, environment, other users in all appropriate sessions
- end of session travel, individual debriefs for the day, unwind

### **Evening:**

- practical and/or theoretical assessment session
- briefing for next session as appropriate

Due to the holistic nature of assessment, some of the syllabus elements will be addressed on more than one day or session.

## Appendix 6

### Provider Guidance

The home nation Training Boards have an established procedure for approving WGL Providers, who may be individuals or organisations. The approval is specific for running WGL courses only and not for any other activities. The Training Boards consider a number of criteria when approving Providers.

#### Course Catchment

A potential Provider must demonstrate a specific catchment for WGL training and assessment candidates. WGL courses are not normally 'closed' (i.e. courses offered only to candidates within one work place), since a good mixture of candidates ensures a greater range of experience and interchange of ideas.

#### Programme

The Training Boards will consider a number of formats as suitable for WGL courses but both training and assessment courses must involve a minimum of thirty hours contact time:

- training courses – a continuous series of days, two weekends within a maximum three-month period or other formats approved by the Board
- assessment courses – a continuous series of days or two consecutive weekends within a maximum one-month period

Training and assessment courses must be separately identifiable and not 'hidden' within a longer scheme of training and assessment such as a twelve-month college course. WGL candidates must be registered for the award in advance of their attendance on a training course and the individual candidates should take responsibility for this. Training and assessment Course Directors are responsible for ensuring that candidates meet all experience requirements at the commencement of the course. Where there are problems with logged experience these should be clarified as early in the course as possible. Training and assessment courses should have different Course Directors if a single Provider offers them on the same dates.

#### Staff Qualifications

The MIA and the IML are the minimum qualification requirements for **WGL Course Directors**. At the time of application the Training Board will also consider their personal and training experience. In order to deliver the WGL scheme Course Directors are required to have considerable experience of delivering Training Board courses.

**Trainers and Assessors:** All staff working on WGL training and assessment courses must hold at least the Mountain Leader Award. They should be mature individuals, with good all-round experience of hill walking and mountaineering and a considerable involvement in the teaching and leadership of others. This guidance does not apply to specialists who often provide a valuable input to training courses but who do not have responsibility for the students during practical sessions.

Attendance at Training Board workshops and other approved events once every three years is mandatory for Course Directors and is recommended for all staff involved in the delivery of WGL training and assessment courses.



## **Staffing Ratios and Candidate Numbers**

**WGL training courses:** maximum ratio is six candidates : one trainer, minimum number of candidates is four

**WGL assessment courses:** maximum ratio is four candidates : one assessor, minimum number of candidates is two

Whenever possible, more than one trainer or assessor should observe each candidate. Larger groups improve exchange of information and ensure a wide range of views and experiences.

## **Moderation**

Moderation of Providers will take place at least once every three years.

# Appendix 7

## Suggested Reading List



### General

- Hillwalking - the official handbook of the Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader schemes . . . . . S Long. MLTUK, revised 2004
- Hillwalking CD - illustrations from the Hillwalking Handbook . . MLTUK
- Mountaincraft and Leadership . . . . . E Langmuir. MLTE/MLTS revised 2004
- Safety on Mountains Video and Booklet . . . . . BMC/MLTB 2000
- Water Safety for Walkers DVD . . . . . MCoFS 2002
- The websites of the Training Boards and Mountaineering Councils

The following publications are relevant to specific syllabus headings:

### 1. Technical Competence

- Expedition Guide . . . . . The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Land Navigation . . . . . W. Keay. D of E, 1994
- Interactive Map Explorer CD Rom . . . . . Ordnance Survey
- Mountain Navigation . . . . . P Cliff. Menasha Ridge Press, 1991
- Teaching Orienteering . . . . . C MacNeill, J Cory-Wright & T Renfrew. Human Kinetics, 1997

## 2. Group Management and the Responsibilities of the Group Leader

Adventure Education	JC Miles & S Priest. Ventura, 1990
Leading and Managing Groups in the Outdoors	Ken Ogilvie.IOL, revised 2005
Managing Risk in Outdoor Activities	C Haddock. NZ Mt Safety Council, 1993
Medicine for Mountaineers	Wilkinson
Medical Handbook for Walkers & Climbers	Peter Steele. Constable & Robinson, 1999
Remote Supervision Guidance Notes	MLTE, reprinted 2006
Safety, Risk & Adventure in Outdoor Activities	B Barton, PCP, 2007
The Adventure Alternative	C Mortlock. Cicerone, revised 2004

## 3. The Upland Environment

Heading for the Scottish Hills	MCofS & Scottish Landowners Federation, 1996
Hostile Habitats	N Kempe, M Wrightham. SMT, 2006
How to Shit in the Woods	K Mayer. Ten Speed Press, 1994
Mountain Weather	D Pedgley. Cicerone, revised 2006
NI Country Code	Countryside Access & Activities Network
New Naturalists Series	Fontana/Collins
Outdoors with Young People	
A Leaders Guide to Outdoor Activities	
the Environment and Sustainability	G Cooper. Russell House 1998
The Countryside Code	Countryside Agency
Weather for Hill Walkers and Climbers	M Thomas. Sutton Publishing, 1997
Where to 'Go' in the Great Outdoors	MCofS, 1999
Wild Flowers - And where to find them in Northern England, Series includes Acid Uplands, Northern Limestone and Waterside Ways	L Fallows. Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2004

## 4. Structure of the Activity

National Guidelines	MLTUK, revised 2005
The BMC - the First Fifty Years	Wilson. Diadem, 1994
Classic Walks	Wilson/Gilbert. Diadem 1982
Mountain and Cave Rescue	MRC. MRC, 2006
Mountaineering Council Magazines:	
Summit	BMC
Scottish Mountaineer	MCofS
Irish Mountain Log	MCI
Walking and Mountaineering Magazines	
Climb, Climber, Trail, TGO, Climber	

The websites of the home nation Training Boards and Mountaineering Councils

## Appendix 8

### The Home Nation Training Boards, MLTUK and the Mountaineering Councils

The prime aim of the four home nation Training Boards is to promote both awareness of mountain safety and good practice through its formal leader training schemes, which include the Walking Group Leader Award, the Mountain Leader Awards (Summer and Winter) and the Single Pitch Award for climbers leading and supervising groups.

Mountain Leader Training UK promotes, co-ordinates and assists the four home nation Training Boards and is directly responsible for the Mountaineering Instructor Scheme and the International Mountain Leader Award.

MLTUK also maintains a centralised national mountain training database, which holds records of registration, training, assessment and qualifications for Walking Group Leaders, Single Pitch Award holders, Mountain Leaders (Summer and Winter), International Mountain Leaders and Mountaineering Instructors throughout the UK.

Should you have questions about any of the other mountain training schemes you can contact the home nation Training Boards or MLTUK at the addresses given below.

#### Mountain Leader Training UK

MLTUK, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ES  
Tel: 01690 720272 Fax: 01690 720248  
Email: [info@mltuk.org](mailto:info@mltuk.org) Website: [www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)

### Home Nation Mountain Training Boards

#### Mountain Leader Training England

MLTE, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ES  
Tel: 01690 720314 Fax: 01690 720248  
Email: [info@mlte.org](mailto:info@mlte.org) Website: [www.mlte.org](http://www.mlte.org)

#### Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland

MLTNI, Tollymore Mountain Centre, Bryansford, Newcastle, Co Down BT33 0PT  
Tel: 02843 722158 Fax: 02843 726155  
Email: [admin@tollymoremc.com](mailto:admin@tollymoremc.com) Website: [www.tollymoremc.com](http://www.tollymoremc.com)

#### Mountain Leader Training Scotland

MLTS, Glenmore, Aviemore, Inverness-shire PH22 1QU  
Tel: 01479 861248 Fax: 01479 861248  
Email: [smltb@aol.com](mailto:smltb@aol.com) Website: [www.mltscotland.org](http://www.mltscotland.org)

#### Mountain Leader Training Wales

MLTW, Siabod Cottage, Capel Curig, Conwy LL24 0ES  
Tel: 01690 720361 Fax: 01690 720248  
Email: [info@mltw.org](mailto:info@mltw.org) Website: [www.mltw.org](http://www.mltw.org)

## **Mountaineering Councils**

### **British Mountaineering Council**

BMC, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB

Tel: 0161 445 6111

Fax: 0161 445 4500

Email: [office@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:office@thebmc.co.uk) Website: [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

### **Mountaineering Council of Ireland**

MCI, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12, Ireland

Tel: 00 353 1 625 1115

Fax: 00 353 1 625 1116

Email: [mci@eircom.net](mailto:mci@eircom.net)

Website: [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

### **Mountaineering Council of Scotland**

MCofS, The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth PH1 5QP

Tel: 01738 638227

Fax: 01738 442095

Email: [info@mountaineering-scotland.org.uk](mailto:info@mountaineering-scotland.org.uk)

Website: [www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk](http://www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk)

## Appendix 9

### Model Upland Environment Paper for WGL

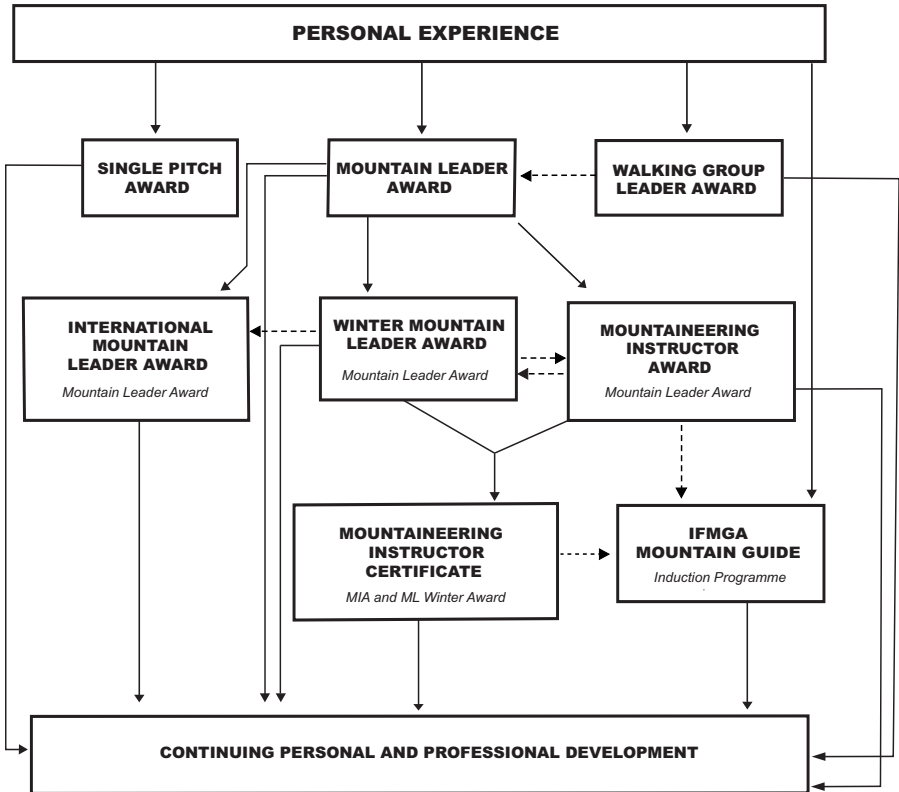
1. Name three sources of information you would use when researching access to an unfamiliar area. (3)
2. One of the most common causes of conflict between landowners and recreational users is control of dogs. Why is this and what advice would you give to your group? (3)
3. Give two reasons why access to upland areas may be temporarily restricted. (2)
4. Name the government agencies responsible for conservation in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (4)
5. Name two organisations that use volunteers to assist with their upland conservation aims? (2)
6. Name four designations that government can award in order to give wild landscapes a degree of protection? (4)
7. What is ACT and what is its role? (2)
8. List three badly-eroded upland paths and describe how you could help control further erosion? (3)
9. How can Walking Group Leaders make a positive contribution towards conserving the environment for the future? (3)
10. You are planning an overnight camp in a moorland location. How would you minimise the impact? (3)
11. What issues do you need to consider when advising your group on sanitary matters and human waste disposal in the uplands? (3)
12. What, if any, bio-degradable material would you leave in the uplands and, if so, how would you leave it? (3)
13. Describe what the main differences in landscape would be if you visited the uplands of Britain and Ireland six thousand years ago. (3)

14. When did the last ice-age come to an end? (1)
- 10 000 years ago
  - 50 000 years ago
  - 100 000 years ago
15. Name and describe three features created by glacial action that can be found in the uplands of the UK? (3)
16. List three types of rock and for each name an upland area in the UK where this rock type is the major influence on the landscape. (3)
17. How is peat formed? (2)
18. Name three plants commonly found in or around wet/boggy areas of upland? (3)
19. Purple saxifrage and mountain avens are examples of arctic alpine plants. Our climate differs from most alpine regions. Why can these plants still be found in our mountains? (3)
20. Name two upland plants that are susceptible to over grazing? (2)
21. Name three types of native tree found in the uplands of Britain and Ireland. (3)
22. Name and describe two upland plants that can easily be recognised by their scent? (2)
23. Name an upland bird that:
- occasionally flies upside down (1)
  - eats other birds (1)
  - is a threatened species (1)
24. Name two animals in the UK uplands that change their appearance depending on the time of year? (2)
25. Name a reptile, an insect and a microbe that could be a hazard to walkers. (3)

Notes: there are a total of sixty eight marks available within this paper. Assessment candidates would normally be capable of gaining at least half marks.

# Appendix 10

## Mountaineering Awards of the UK



Key: Pre-requisite qualifications shown in italics  
Dotted lines show optional pathways

NOTE: As candidates progress to higher awards personal experience requirements increase.





# Mountain Leader Training Association

## **The association for climbing and walking leaders.**

MLTA aims to provide good communication between leaders and the Mountain Leader Training Boards allowing members to keep up to date with current developments in mountain training. It also aims to provide appropriate training opportunities in the form of workshops and seminars.

## **Membership**

Full Membership is open to leaders who have passed the assessment course of one of the national awards of the UK's Mountain Training Boards.

The relevant awards are SPA, WGL, ML, ML(W), and higher awards.

Associate Membership is open to leaders who have registered for any of the above awards but have yet to pass an assessment course.

**Note: All MLTA members must be a member of a Mountaineering Council.**

## **The Benefits**

- Talk to other members, share ideas or concerns and have your say via the lively Forum
- Browse the Library of topical articles and features
- Receive regular informative e-newsletters
- Access to a program of Further Training workshops and related National Events
- Contact leaders looking for work on the Notice Board
- Priority channel to get information from the Helpdesk
- Advice on and access to Insurance for members' activities.
- Access to preferential rates on Clothing and Equipment

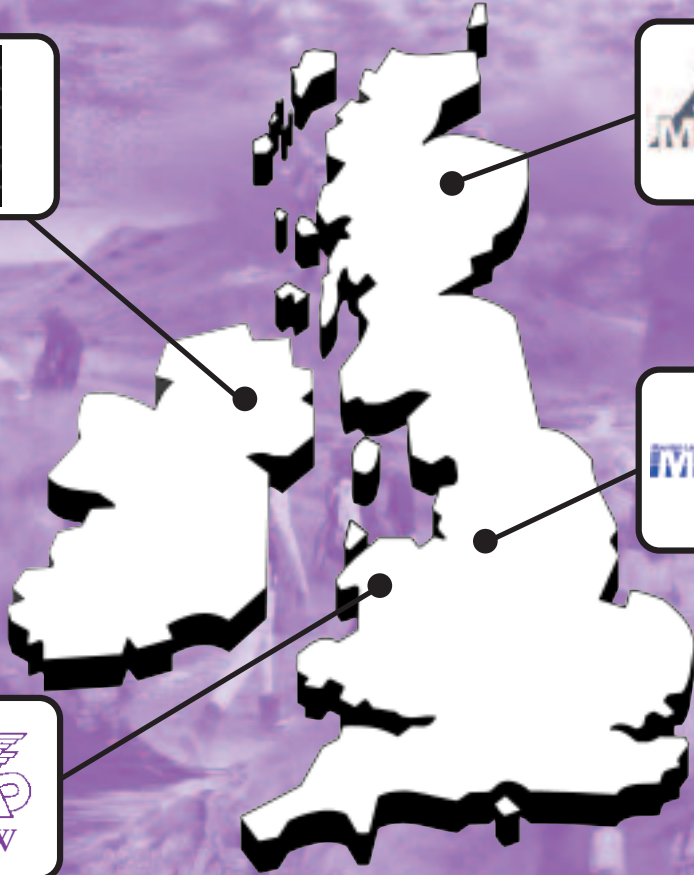
## **Additional Benefits**

MLTA is run from the Mountain Leader Training offices at Siabod Cottage and members have direct access to the MLTA Technical Officer, who will deal with all your queries with support from other highly experienced staff members.

## **How to join?**

Join when you renew your Mountaineering Council membership or go to [www.mlta.co.uk](http://www.mlta.co.uk) and join on-line.

————— [www.mlta.co.uk](http://www.mlta.co.uk) —————



£5.00



Mountain Leader Training UK

Hyfforddi Arweinwyr Mynydda y Deyrnas Unedig