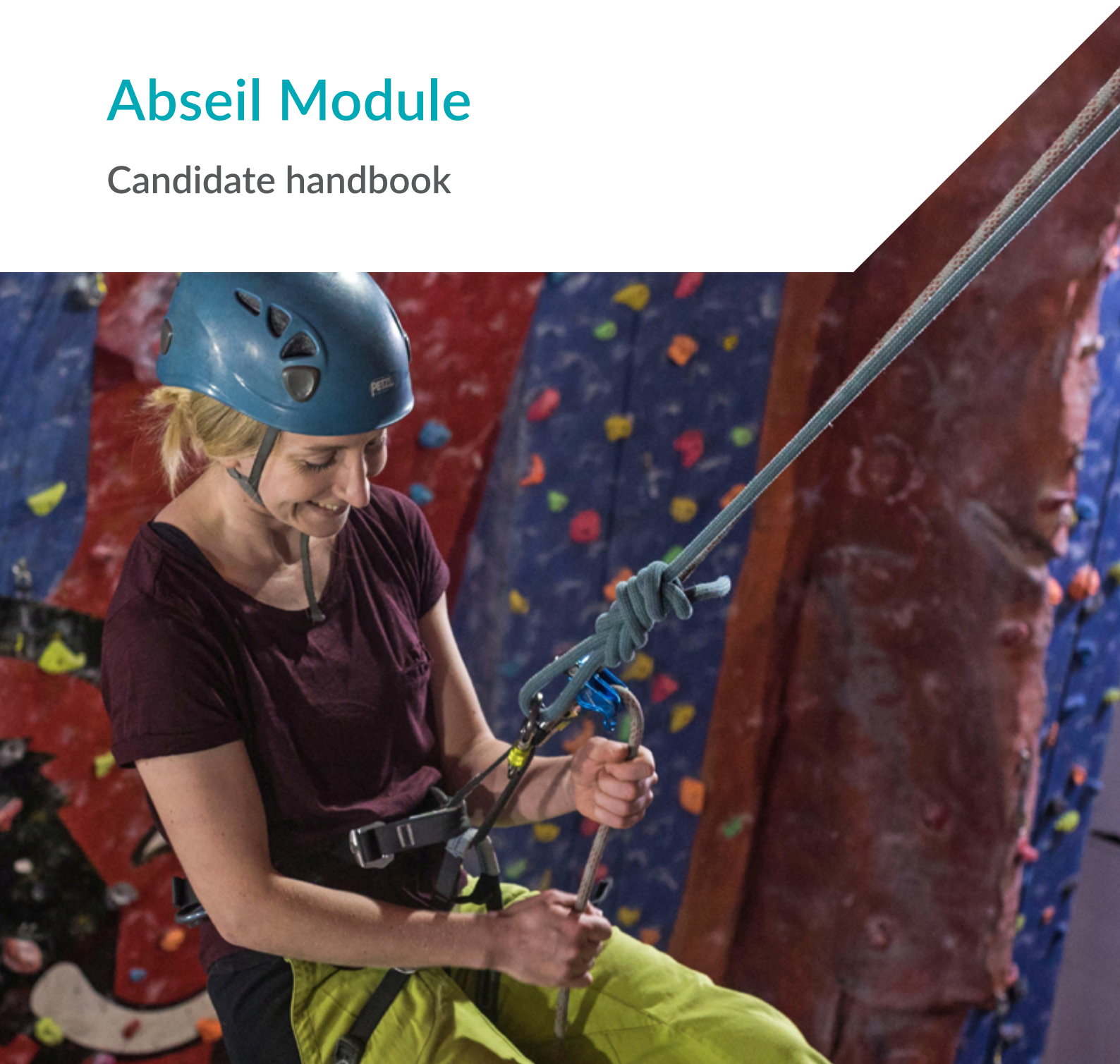




Mountain Training

Abseil Module

Candidate handbook





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Preface

This handbook has been designed to support candidates through Mountain Training's Abseil Module. It contains useful information about the various stages in the qualification as well as the syllabus and guidance notes.

Participation statement

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

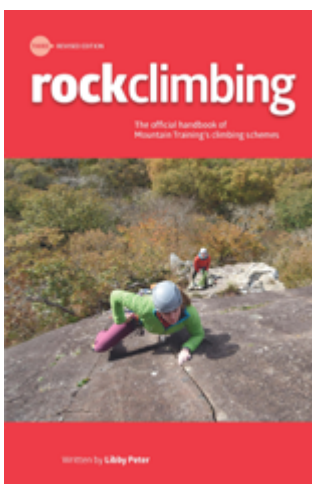
All instructors owe a heightened duty of care to the people they instruct, their colleagues, and the wider public who may be impacted by the instructor's actions.

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

Acknowledgements

Mountain Training would like to thank all the staff members and volunteers involved in the Climbing Awards Review 2014-2016.

Thanks also to the following individuals and organisations whose photographs bring the handbook to life: Jessie Leong, Karl Midlane, NICAS, Rick Singh, Rob Greenwood and The Adventure Brand.



Rock Climbing

Throughout this handbook there are references to Rock Climbing by Libby Peter which we publish to support developing rock climbers and instructors. It is packed with essential information and techniques and we have listed the relevant chapter(s) for each syllabus area.



1. Qualification pathway

1.1 Introduction

This module is optional and enables Climbing Wall Instructors to manage top-roping and abseiling sessions with groups on purpose-built artificial climbing walls and structures. Awareness of the skills outlined in the main Climbing Wall Instructor syllabus is assumed and not repeated here.

1.2 Scope of the qualification

A qualified Climbing Wall instructor who has gained the Abseil Module can:

- Run top-roping sessions.
- Run abseiling sessions.
- Manage groups safely in these activities.

1.2.1 Terrain

A qualified Climbing Wall Instructor who has gained the Abseil Module can operate on:

- Indoor and outdoor climbing walls which are designed for top-roping or abseiling.

1.2.2 Exclusions

The qualification does not cover:

- Via ferrata courses on artificial walls.

1.3 Stages in the qualification

1.3.1 Registration prerequisites

Registration on the Abseil Module is given to candidates automatically when they register on the Climbing Wall Instructor qualification.



1.3.2 Training prerequisites

- You must have completed Climbing Wall Instructor training
- You must have registered for the Abseil Module (this is added automatically when you register for the Climbing Wall Instructor qualification).
- You must have an up-to-date logbook (preferably DLOG) with evidence of the following:
 - Experience of at least 5 abseils from more than one location.

1.3.3 Consolidation period

Climb and abseil at as wide a range of venues as possible, both as an individual and when assisting with the supervision of others.

Mountain Training recommends that all but the most experienced candidates allow a minimum of three months between training and assessment.

There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the module.



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1.3.4 Assessment prerequisites

- You must have completed the Abseil Module training course or have been granted exemption from training.
- You must have passed Climbing Wall Instructor assessment.
- You must have observed or assisted on a minimum of 5 abseil/top-rope sessions.
- You must have physically attended and completed (i.e. not online) a first aid course which involved at least one full day or eight hours of instruction and included an element of assessment.



2. Course structure

2.1 Training

Training will involve a minimum of 4 hours contact time.

Results: Pass, Not Yet Completed, Withdrew, Did Not Show, Exemption

2.2 Assessment

Assessment will involve a minimum of 2 hours contact time.

Results: Pass, Defer or Fail, Not Yet Completed, Withdrew, Did Not Show

Practical reassessments cannot take place within three months of the initial assessment to allow sufficient time for practice and preparation. All deferral reassessments must be completed within five years of the original assessment. Candidates may undertake two short reassessments after a defer result. Subsequently a full assessment must be undertaken.

3. Course delivery

3.1 Training

Course directors must be Climbing Wall Development Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements. Additional staff must be Climbing Wall Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Min. course size: 2, max. course size: 12, max ratio: 1:6.

3.2 Assessment

Course directors must be Climbing Wall Development Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements. Additional staff must be Climbing Wall Development Instructor or higher plus national Mountain Training organisation requirements.

Min. course size: 2, max. course size: 8, max. ratio: 1:4



4. Awarding organisations

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





Syllabus and guidance notes

Technical competence



Instructors who have passed the Abseil Module will be able to identify and evaluate commonly used top-roping and abseiling equipment and demonstrate its use to individuals during a top-roping/abseil session. They will be personally competent in a range of indoor climbing techniques used in top-roping and abseiling sessions and be able to provide clear demonstration and effective tuition to novice climbers. They will be able to:

1. Equipment

- 1.1 Select and fit suitable climbing equipment for top-roping and abseiling.
- 1.2 Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the condition of personal abseiling equipment and ensure appropriate use, care and maintenance in line with manufacturer's guidance.
- 1.3 Demonstrate an ability to evaluate the condition of climbing wall equipment and ensure appropriate use of:



1.3.1 In-situ ropes.

1.3.2 Anchors/lower offs and fixed equipment.

2. Personal safety

2.1 Demonstrate appropriate methods of protecting themselves while operating at height during all activities.

Guidance

Instructors may spend time at the top of a wall in order to set up climbing/abseiling systems for their groups. As the nature and conditions of each situation may be different, instructors can utilise a range of methods to ensure their safety.

These methods need to may be carried out with commonly used climbing equipment, which may involve some level of improvisation. If single anchors are being used extreme care must be taken.



Chapter 6 Technical essentials

Chapter 7 Indoor climbing

Key practice points

- Ensure that the anchor being used to safeguard the instructor is reliable.
- Experiment with adjusting different methods of safeguarding yourself that enable you to set up safely without putting yourself in a position where a fall can happen.
- Practise various methods on a range of different situations to develop an understanding of which approach will suit each scenario.



3. Belaying

- 3.1 Tie into the rope. Attach group members to the rope with an without a karabiner.
- 3.2 Demonstrate the use of indirect and direct belay systems at the tope of a climbing wall, and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.
- 3.3 Set up top-rope systems and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.
- 3.4 Hold falls and control lowers.
- 3.5 Supervise others belaying.
- 3.6 Attach self and others to the belay system and abseil ropes.

4. Abseiling

- 4.1 Abseil without requiring a back-up safety rope.
- 4.2 Demonstrate methods of safeguarding a novice abseiling.
- 4.3 Utilise belay points for both abseil and safety ropes.



- 4.4 Use common devices for abseiling competently and choose the most appropriate for a given situation.
- 4.5 Demonstrate techniques for managing the safety of participants at the top of walls.

Guidance

The figure of eight descender is still probably the most used specialist abseil device and an awareness of how it should be used correctly and an understanding of typical misuse should be pursued. The prusik loop will only be required as a back-up when abseiling alone without a safety rope.

In the case of managing abseils the instructor will normally be at the top of the abseil. You should be able to manage the abseil using a direct belay system using in-situ anchors. It is common for students to abseil with the abseil rope clipped directly to their harness with a screw gate (or equivalent) karabiner. Take care with long tails on the safety knot or the safety rope twisted around the abseil. If these situations occur you should take the time to adjust your system accordingly.

You should be comfortable abseiling without a backup rope; as with the climbing elements, you must be able to perform as a good role model. You may choose to abseil with a French prusik back up, but also consider using a specialist abseil protection device like a Petzl Shunt. It is important you understand the limitations of using a prusik as a back-up.

When demonstrating how to safeguard a novice there is no better way than with a safety rope from above. You will normally be abseiling from fixed platforms which have built-in anchors placed at an ideal height. Some abseil towers have anchors quite close to the edge and this will require management to get the abseiler weighting the rope. You will need to understand the pros and cons of different anchor positions.

You will need to be very clear when managing people at the top of abseils; clear demarcation of areas is essential. Clear instruction on how many people should be where and the use of safety ropes and other means of protecting novice abseilers should be applied.



Chapter 6 Technical essentials

Chapter 7 Indoor climbing



Key practice points

- When transferring people from 'safe' ground to the abseil you should protect them very carefully.
- Keep your hand on the safety rope of the abseiler at all times.
- Keep the anchors, abseiler and the descent all in line to create stability.





Management and decision making



Instructors who have passed the Abseil Module should be able to independently organise, plan, manage and deliver top-roping and/or abseiling sessions to a wide range of participants, from novices to experienced climbers, often with support from an assistant. They should be able to:

5. Leadership and decision-making

5.1 Demonstrate adaptable leadership behaviours and decision-making.

6. Managing/supervising other staff

6.1 Describe the role and scope of an assistant. Describe the opportunities and liabilities presented by using an assistant in a session.

6.2 Manage an assistant.



7. Knowledge and demonstration of techniques

7.1 Deliver technical abseiling instruction to individuals and the group.

8. Hazards and emergency procedures

8.1 Manage the safety of those arriving at the top of a wall.

8.2 Avoid common abseiling and top-roping problems.

8.3 Deal with common abseiling and top-roping problems if they occur.

Guidance

Outdoor abseil towers can be quite exposed to the weather, so you should dress and equip your groups accordingly.

You must give your group a clear brief on how the abseil is going to work so that they can visualise the sequence of events. You need to identify safe zones and incorporate scope for the group to support and photograph each other. You need to be well positioned to offer support to the abseiler when going over the edge and to be able to observe them down to the ground.

You should be conversant with the common problems which might occur when abseiling. These might include loose garments, rope ends or even hair catching in the abseil device. Take care and time to avoid this happening, make sure hair is tied back, baggy clothing is tucked securely out of the way and there are no loose ends of rope in reach of the abseil device. Figure of eight descenders can lark's foot themselves if dragged over edges and jam.

Common abseil problems can usually be prevented and are rare. If an abseiler does become stuck then by far the easiest solution is to tie off the safety rope and release the tension on the abseil rope. This is easily achieved with a releasable abseil set up. You will need to be capable of tying off an Italian hitch or a belay plate quickly and efficiently when it is under load.



Chapter 7 Indoor climbing

Chapter 13 Inspiring others



Key practice point

- Practise releasing the abseil rope under load to become efficient and confident at this technique – that is reassuring to the abseiler and the rest of the group.

Teaching and learning skills



Instructors will frequently need to give tuition and support to a range of climbers from novices to experienced practitioners in basic top-roping and/or abseiling techniques. They should be able to:

9. Teaching and learning

- 9.1 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the teaching style to meet group needs.
- 9.2 Identify and use appropriate tasks to develop safe group activity.
- 9.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for evaluating a session and success of the outcome.



Guidance

Instructors need to quickly create an environment of trust and confidence within their group so that participants feel safe and comfortable to tackle new and challenging activities. Age, ability, special needs, confidence and energy levels amongst the group will influence the best approach to achieve this.

Good communication skills are key. The foundations of effective teaching include the ability to create rapport, communicate at an appropriate level, use positive language, provide a variety of demonstration techniques, check for understanding through skilled questioning and give useful feedback and encouragement to individuals.



Chapter 13 Inspiring others

Key practice points

- A good demonstration saves a thousand words – focus on the abseiler's posture.
- Practise at ground level with novices before going to height.



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“The Association offers an excellent range of CPD, which has given me a broader understanding of the role, skills and expertise required to be a great leader. Definitely recommend.” Charlie, Association member.