



## **The National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme**

### **Handbook**

**The National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme is a UK wide scheme designed to promote climbing development and accredit individual achievement on artificial climbing structures. It can be used as a starting point for people wishing to take up climbing and mountaineering. The scheme is administered by the Association of British Climbing Walls Training Trust (ABCTT). This handbook provides full details and guidance on the delivery of the scheme for trainers, assessors and course providers.**

#### **Preface**

Every week thousands of people climb indoors and outdoors on purpose built artificial climbing walls in the UK. For many the climbing wall is their first introduction to the absorbing world of climbing. The ABCTT is concerned that high standards should be encouraged early on in a participant's climbing career so that both safety and enjoyment can be practised to the full.

Climbing walls have become one of the principal training grounds for novice and advanced climbers alike and provide a great opportunity to develop some of the skills and knowledge relevant to the wider world of climbing. In particular they are excellent venues for the training of the safety chain principle, and the development of climbing technique, movement and fitness.

It is hoped that the National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme will provide the structure and motivation for new climbers to develop their skills in order that they may gain the most out of their climbing as well as having their achievements recognised. It is anticipated that most of the participants on this scheme will be under 18 years of age and the guidelines have therefore been written with minors in mind.

This handbook provides advice and guidance for Course Providers, Trainers and Assessors on how to deliver the scheme on artificial climbing walls. Venues will vary and so the design of the training and assessment courses will be the responsibility of each centre. This handbook therefore seeks to support the knowledge and skills of trainers and assessors without proscribing exact methods.

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## Prospectus

### Rationale and philosophy of the Scheme

1. The National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme is designed to provide a structure for complete novices through to experienced indoor climbers for learning the skills associated with climbing on artificial climbing walls. It provides a structured programme of training and development in the sport that can be followed to a range of levels.
2. The Scheme aims to promote good practice, deeper knowledge of the sport and provide a structure for climbing development. The emphasis is on acquiring skills and developing progression rather than graded performance. Centres may wish to run their own graded performance systems alongside this scheme.
3. The Scheme is open to candidates of nearly all ages and abilities. No upper age limit has been stipulated though it is envisaged that the levels will appeal most to youth and those who are new to the sport.
4. The levels are not qualifications in any sense but seek to accredit achievement and development in the sport of climbing. There is no direct correlation between the levels of the Scheme and individual centres' admission procedures. All level holders will still have to satisfy any individual climbing centre's own registration procedures.

### Remit and scope of the Scheme

1. The minimum age for registration onto the scheme is 7. The scheme is designed for anyone with the aptitude to learn how to climb independently on artificial climbing structures. Individual centres will need to assess the suitability of each candidate to attempt each level.
2. The aims of the scheme are:
  - to develop climbing movement skills and improve levels of ability.
  - to learn climbing rope-work and how to use equipment appropriately.
  - to develop risk assessment and risk management skills in the sport.
  - to work as a team, communicate with, and trust a climbing partner.
  - to provide a structure for development, motivation and improved performance .
  - to develop an understanding of the sport, it's history and future challenges
  - to provide a record of personal achievement.
  - to point the way to further disciplines and challenges in climbing beyond the scheme
3. NICAS is fully transferable between awarding centres but is independent of their registration procedures. The scheme recognises achievement, experience and knowledge observed at a particular centre(s) on particular dates. The levels awarded do not necessarily confer membership at that centre, nor at any other centre.
4. Level holders are recognised by the ABCTT as having demonstrated consistent good practice and required skills and knowledge at each of the five levels.
5. The scheme does not cover the teaching of rock climbing skills in the natural environment, though an experience of outdoor climbing and bouldering is particularly beneficial at the highest level of the scheme.

## Structure of the Scheme

1. The scheme is split into five levels. Each level follows the same basic stages:
  1. Register with an approved Awarding Centre and be issued with a log book (or booklet).
  2. Attend a training course at that centre.
  3. Continue to consolidate experience according to the level requirements and record this appropriately.
  4. Attend an assessment course or complete continuous assessment as appropriate.
  5. Continue to gain and log climbing experience in preparation for the next level if required.
2. The five levels are designed to introduce complete novices to the sport of artificial wall climbing and aid progress through to becoming lead climbers with a sound understanding of the skills and knowledge of good practice in the climbing wall environment.
3. The levels are:
  1. Foundation climber – an entry level award aimed at novices, which recognises their ability to climb safely under supervision.
  2. Top rope climber – aimed at promoting good practice in climbing and bouldering independently on an artificial wall.
  3. Technical climber – a more advanced top roping and bouldering award that focuses on developing technique and movement skills.
  4. Lead climber - concentrating on the skills required to both lead climb and lead belay proficiently.
  5. Advanced climber – the top level award that focuses on improving performance, a deeper understanding of climbing systems and the wider world of climbing.
4. Levels 1 and 2 require qualified supervision and are documented and recorded in a NICAS booklet. Levels 3-5 are pursued in a more independent fashion with instruction and coaching offered at appropriate times. The candidates record their progress in a separate NICAS log book into which the level 1/2 booklet clips in.

## Registration

1. In order for a candidate to participate in the scheme they must first register with an Awarding Centre. Awarding Centres will be registered with NICAS and their details can be found on the NICAS website.
2. Candidates may enter the scheme at any level but will have to demonstrate to their Awarding Centre that they are ready to undertake the level or can satisfy the assessment criteria of the previous level before they can participate at their chosen level.
3. Registration onto the scheme is made directly with the Awarding Centre and will not involve any administration with the ABCCTT or any external body. There is a standard fee for registration to cover administration and material costs. Upon registering, the candidate will receive a log book with full details of the whole scheme and all necessary log pages. Should additional log pages be required these can be photocopied or downloaded from the NICAS website and added to the log book.
4. If individuals or groups only wish to participate in Levels 1 and 2 of the scheme then they may purchase the part 1 booklet at a reduced rate as the rest of the log book is not required at these levels.

## Training courses

1. Training courses and all supporting materials are to be provided by the Awarding Centre. Each Awarding Centre will design and deliver its own training courses to satisfy the requirements of the syllabus for each level of the scheme. Guidance is offered to trainers later in this handbook for the delivery of these courses. The guidance describes minimum standards for the levels and trainers may choose to train to higher standards for suitable candidates.
2. Awarding Centres may charge independently for training courses and any supplementary materials.

## The log book and consolidation periods

1. For all levels in the scheme a log book is issued and candidates will need to record their climbing experience in it. There is no requirement for candidates to use this outside the climbing centre for levels 1-4 and centres may wish to retain these for younger candidates.
2. Each achievement level requires the candidates to complete a minimum number of climbs/ boulder problems. These need to be recorded by the candidate for inspection at assessment.
3. The consolidation period for each level is important as it allows candidates to become familiar with new techniques and to develop fitness and skills.
4. Each of the levels in the scheme has guideline hours of climbing activity described for them. These represent the suggested climbing time that would be required by a mature, skilled and knowledgeable candidate to complete each level. The guideline hours include any training and /or instructed time. It should be noted that the hours stated for each level are considered **minimum times** and that candidates may need to develop their skills over a longer period before being ready for assessment.

## Assessment

1. Candidates should be registered at the Awarding Centre that they wish to be assessed at. If a candidate wishes to be assessed at a new centre from that which they trained at, they should re-register with the new centre. There is no additional cost for this.
2. Each Awarding Centre will design and run its own assessment courses to satisfy the requirements for each level of the scheme. Guidance is offered to assessors later in this handbook on the criteria for these assessments. The delivery of the assessments may take the form of a formal course run by the centre or a more continuous assessment.
3. For each level there will be a standard assessment log that will need to be completed in the presence of an assessor. This log will detail the assessment elements for that level and will require the assessor to witness the candidate's completion of these. Upon successful completion of each element the assessor will sign and date the relevant section in the log.
4. When all the elements of a level have been satisfied (and an assessor has signed them off) the pass certificate for that level will be awarded to the candidate.
5. Pass certificates will be awarded by the Awarding Centre and are accredited by the ABCCTT.
6. If the candidate fails to satisfy any of the assessment criteria the assessor will debrief them and offer remedial strategies for improvement. There is no time limit or limit to the number of assessment attempts a candidate may wish to make.

## Primary Centres

A network of Primary Centres will provide advice and training for other Awarding Centres as well as supplying log books and certificates. These centres will provide induction workshops for Course Directors (see Requirements for Awarding Centres) and deliver level 5 coaching for candidates. Only Primary Centres can award level 5 certificates. At present a Primary Centre must be an ABC member wall. A list of Primary Centres and their details can be accessed on the NICAS website.

## Transferability between centres

1. The scheme is fully transferable between Awarding Centres. Candidates may register for different levels of the scheme at different Awarding Centres and may also complete a level at a different centre from the one they started it at. National certificates will be awarded for each completed level by the Awarding Centre carrying out the assessment.
2. Upon transferring to a new Awarding Centre to register for another level the candidate may have to satisfy the new centre that they are ready to take this level. Any new climbing centre should satisfy itself that the candidate is ready to progress to the next level and that this is an appropriate step. The holding of any achievement level does not necessarily imply competency.

## Equal Opportunities

The ABCTT is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all participants in climbing. The scheme is designed to be open to all with the aptitude to undertake the described activities at each level with due regard for their own and others' safety. Candidates, trainers and assessors should express a positive attitude towards equal opportunities and act as positive role models.

## Complaints and Appeals Procedure

1. NICAS is subject to continuous monitoring, culminating in annual reviews by the board of the ABCTT. Candidates and supporting organisations with feedback on their courses are encouraged to submit written comments to the Awarding Centre or the ABCTT.
2. If for any reason a candidate or supporting organisation finds it necessary to complain about an aspect of their training or assessment then they should contact the Course Director at the Awarding Centre or the NICAS Officer at the ABCTT.
3. If a candidate feels that aspects of their assessment were unfair they should:
  - Make contact with the Course Director, explain their concerns and seek clarification.
  - If this does not resolve their concerns, contact the Secretary of the ABCTT for advice.

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

## Requirements for Awarding Centres

### Registration

1. All climbing centres who wish to deliver any levels of the scheme must apply for registration as an Awarding Centre from the ABCTT. A climbing centre is defined as any organisation – voluntary or professional – that owns or manages an artificial climbing facility (indoors or outdoors). Approval will only be given to organisations, not individuals, and will be restricted to a named climbing facility. Individual freelance instructors may deliver the Scheme through a centre with the approval of the registered Course Provider and after induction (see below). Mobile climbing facilities will generally not be approved unless they are part of a larger organisation with its own static facility.
2. Centres will be approved to deliver stipulated levels of the scheme depending upon the quality of their physical and human resources. Most centres that instruct top roping with students belaying should be able to deliver levels 1 and 2 (See Minimum Awarding Centre Requirements). For the delivery of higher levels approval will depend upon the nature of the facility and level of qualifications and training of trainers and assessors. The registration application must be supported by the centre's Technical Advisor (see below).
3. Approval will be granted by the ABCTT for the period of one year. Should the ABCTT feel that any element of the applicant's provision of the scheme requires further explanation or appears unsatisfactory then approval will be withheld and the application referred back to the centre for its resolution.
4. Registration will carry a fee payable to the 'ABC Training Trust'. Registration will need to be renewed on an annual basis in order to maintain approval.

### Registered Course Director

1. To gain approved status with the ABCTT each centre must register a named Course Director. This person will be responsible for the delivery and quality of the scheme within the organisation. (See Responsibilities of the Awarding Centre). The Course Director is responsible for providing training and induction for any instructional staff and external instructors who wish to train and assess the scheme at that centre. The Course Director may refer to a Technical Advisor for support on the design and delivery of the scheme and any such training. Inducted instructors – in house or external must be recorded.
2. The Course Director will act as the link between the centre and the ABCTT and will be responsible for ordering log books and materials from the ABCTT.
3. The Course Director is responsible for the development and implementation of Child Protection Policy at their centre including CRB checks and references for instructors where appropriate.
4. The Course Director is responsible for the awarding and recording of NICAS certificates (though this may be delegated).
5. In order for a centre to deliver the scheme at any level the Course Director (and any other registered Assisting Directors) must have attended a NICAS induction workshop. They will subsequently need to attend a further workshop every three years. These courses will be provided by approved Primary Centres around the UK.
6. If the Course Director leaves the organisation responsible for the climbing centre the centre must re-register a new Course Director or lose its approval status.

## External Instructors

Qualified instructors who are not linked to any particular climbing wall may also deliver the scheme through an Awarding Centre with the induction and approval of that centre. They may train and assess candidates at any level but cannot award certificates – this must be done by the Awarding Centre. The Course Director of the Awarding centre must satisfy himself that they have sufficient qualifications, training, experience and public liability insurance to deliver the relevant levels of the scheme.

## Technical Advisors

Every approved climbing centre wishing to deliver the scheme must have access to a named Technical Advisor (MIA, MIC, UIAGM Guide) for advice, in accordance with MLT National Guidelines. **All Primary Centre Course Directors may act as Technical Advisors for NICAS.** Levels 3-5 teach skills and knowledge that are outside and above many instructor training schemes, including the SPA. In many cases Course Directors or their Technical Advisors will have to provide extra training for their staff in order to deliver these higher levels of the scheme to a satisfactory standard. The ABCTT will be able to provide technical advice through its NICAS Officer.

The centre's Technical Advisor must support its registration application to the ABCTT. Their expertise is required to confirm that the centre has the appropriate resources to deliver the levels of the scheme that it has applied for.

Technical Advisors can advise on course design, delivery, procedures, staff training, moderation and assessment procedures. It is advised that Course Directors select a Technical Advisor with a strong background in the use of climbing walls.

## Administration

1. The scheme is designed to keep administrative burdens to a minimum. There is no central database of candidates as the scheme does not confer any qualification. Candidates will only communicate with the approved Awarding Centre that they are registered with.
2. The Course Director will communicate with the ABCTT for advice and to order log books and certificates. The Course Director will be required to keep a simple record of candidates stating their name, DOB, date of registration, organisation (if any) and dates of achieving levels. This will aid the problem of lost log books. The ABC reserves the right to ask for these details to help them review and develop the scheme in the future. A pro forma for this will be provided upon registration.
3. The centre will be responsible for administering log books to candidates and delivering training and assessments. There are no training or assessment reports required by the ABCTT.

## Materials

1. Log books, booklets and certificates can be ordered by the Course Director from the ABCTT. These will cost the Awarding Centre a standard price set by the ABCTT and can be ordered as required. Centres are free to insert pages of their own into the log books detailing their own courses. A list of commercially available training materials is provided in the appendix.
2. Welsh language log book pages and certificates will be provided in electronic form on the NICAS website for Awarding Centres to download if required.

## National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme

### Minimum Instructor requirements

In order to train or assess on the scheme instructors must satisfy the minimum qualification requirements for each level set out in the table below:

Level	Minimum qualifications	Notes
1	Site Specific* or CWA	*approved by Technical Advisor
2	Site Specific* or CWA	*approved by Technical Advisor
3	Site Specific or CWA + in-house training or external course*	*eg the BMC's 'FUNdamentals' course
4	SPA/CWA + in-house training*	*approved by Technical Advisor
5	SPA/CWA + ABCTT workshops*	*offered through Primary Centres

It should be noted that these are minimum qualifications and that for levels 3-5 the trainer's / assessor's knowledge, risk management and coaching skills will be just as important. It is the responsibility of the Course Director with the support of their Technical Advisor to train and approve trainers and assessors for the scheme up to level 4. A documented approval scheme will need to be implemented that demonstrates that their instructional staff have the required skills and knowledge to work at these levels. To work on level 5 courses instructors will have to attend an ABCTT approved course. These will be offered through Primary Centres and will be advertised on the NICAS website.

### Minimum physical requirements for Awarding Centres

Centres must have adequate physical resources to deliver the scheme in order to be registered as an Awarding Centre. The climbing structures should generally have enough varied climbing to satisfy the log book requirements. It may be possible however to supplement the Awarding Centres' facilities with those of other walls. Such arrangements would need to be detailed on the Awarding Centre's registration application. As a guide the following criteria would generally be regarded as minimums for each level. Final approval for registration will be given by the ABCTT.

Level	Roped Climbing	Bouldering/ traverses/ training areas
1	3 lines: minimum 5m high	None
2	6 lines: minimum 5m high with marked routes	Some – could be on wall
3	Dedicated climbing facility with 30x 5m+ set routes	Dedicated bouldering area: 30+ problems
4	Dedicated lead wall with 30 x 8m+ lead routes	Not required though highly beneficial
5	Major climbing facility with 50 x 8m+ lead routes Currently need to be an ABC Primary Centre	Dedicated bouldering area with 30+ problems/ training boards and circuits

## Responsibilities of the Awarding Centre

1. All registered centres are responsible for the delivery of any courses and the instruction, supervision and safety of any candidates. The registered centre should deliver the scheme in accordance with the NICAS guidelines issued in this handbook. The Course Director is the named individual responsible for ensuring that the centre complies with the NICAS policies and guidelines detailed in this handbook. The ABCTT accepts no direct liability whatsoever related to the delivery of any course associated with this scheme. *The ABCTT and BMC recognise that climbing and mountaineering are hazardous activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities and their parents/guardians should be made aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.*
2. In particular centres must ensure that:
  - a. A full risk assessment is carried out on all activities undertaken in relation to the scheme.
  - b. Clear written procedures arising from the risk assessment are communicated to all instructors.
  - c. Instructional staff are monitored in the performance of their duties with regard to these procedures.
  - d. Candidates are fully informed of the nature of any activities to be undertaken and that the BMC participation statement is explained to them (where appropriate).
  - e. Parents/ guardians of minors are informed of the activities to be undertaken and that informed written consent has been obtained from them. (Centres may wish to consider asking parents to read the BMC Parents Guide and then sign on the parental consent form that they have read it.)
  - f. The centre has a clear Child Protection Policy that is communicated to all staff who will come into contact with minors. Those in a position of trust, authority, or those with unsupervised access to under 18s are required to be properly vetted using the current Criminal Records Bureau process.
  - g. Any information held about candidates complies with the Data Protection Act.
  - h. Adequate public liability insurance cover is in place for all activities undertaken.

## Moderation

1. The quality of the National Scheme relies upon the quality of the trainers and assessors who deliver the course. The registered Course Director is responsible for ensuring the quality of instruction, supervision and assessment at all times. The ABCTT expects the Course Director to monitor the performance of all instructors delivering the awards on a regular basis. The timing, frequency and methods of moderation will be site specific and advice can be sought from the centre's own Technical Advisor if necessary. The ABCTT reserves the right to inspect and moderate Awarding Centres in their delivery of the scheme as it sees fit.
2. In cases of complaints or concerns about poor quality of instruction or supervision the ABCTT reserves the right to investigate the centre concerned and suggest remedial action. In an extreme case the ABCTT may revoke approval for the centre to deliver the scheme if the situation cannot be resolved to the ABCTT's satisfaction.

## Syllabus and assessment criteria

### Level 1: Foundation climber

#### Content:

- Awareness of safety rules and hazards, appropriate dress and behaviour
- Putting on a harness and helmet correctly
- Participate in warm ups
- Connecting harness to rope with a retied figure of 8 knot with stopper knot.
- Climbing a chosen route with confidence
- Safe belaying under supervision
- Correct method of descending by climber
- Basic climbing moves

#### Assessment criteria:

- Awareness of safety rules and hazards
- Put on harness and helmet correctly
- Tie a retied figure of eight knot with stopper knot
- Climb a chosen route with confidence
- Descend from a route correctly
- Belay safely under supervision
- Demonstrate consistent safe behaviour
- Complete 10 climbs of any grade (rainbow)
- Complete 10 belays

### Level 2: Top rope climber

#### Content:

- Connecting self and others to rope with a retied figure of eight knot and stopper knot
- Pre-climb checks
- Belaying and lowering using a suitable belay device
- Ground anchor systems
- Holding a fall in a bottom rope situation (belayer on ground with rope passing through top anchor)
- Effective communication and teamwork with climbing partner
- Knowledge of indoor climbing (French sport) and bouldering grades
- Selection of appropriate routes
- Effective safe use of a bouldering/ traversing wall (if applicable)
- Simple climbing technique – the use of feet and legs, relaxed upright stance, confident approach, smooth movement and observation of holds.

#### Assessment criteria:

- Connect rope to harness with retied figure 8 and stopper knot consistently
- Consistently performs pre-climb checks
- Belays consistently correctly
- Can safely hold a simple top rope fall
- Lowers a climber consistently correctly
- Communicates well with climber
- Understanding of French sport grades and selection of appropriate routes
- Safe and effective use of a bouldering/ traversing wall
- Complete 25 set climbs of any grade
- Complete 25 belays

### **Level 3: Technical climber**

#### **Content:**

- Knowledge of different harness types, helmets, rock shoes and belay devices – including the ability to evaluate their condition and ensure appropriate care and maintenance.
- Knots – figure of eight on the bight, clove hitch, overhand.
- Belaying using a variety of devices and choice of appropriate device.
- Knowledge of a wide range of appropriate climbing techniques
- Principles of good climbing movement
- The structure of a climbing session - warming up exercises, stretching, gentle climbing, peaking, warming down, rest
- Climbing websites, literature, magazines and films

#### **Assessment criteria:**

- Complete a minimum of 30 logged top rope climbs.
- Demonstrate progression of at least one full grade on top roped climbs
- Have knowledge of and demonstrate the use of three different belay devices
- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of basic indoor climbing equipment
- Demonstrate and explain 5 warming up exercises
- Complete a minimum of 20 boulder problems demonstrating improvement.
- Demonstrate and explain 5 different climbing techniques.
- Tie figure 8 on the bight, overhand knot and clove hitch
- Watch and describe a climbing film/video.
- Visit two climbing related websites and retrieve requested information.

### **Level 4: Lead Climber**

#### **Content:**

- The hazards of lead climbing
- Climbing ropes - types, uses, construction, coiling and maintenance
- Knowledge of quickdraws and racking on harness
- Warming up – mentally and physically
- Lead belaying with appropriate belay devices
- Holding a leader fall
- Correct use of the rope whilst clipping running belays (back clipping, z clipping etc)
- Efficient movement and clipping from rest
- Clipping in and lowering off
- Effective communication with climbing partner

#### **Assessment criteria:**

- Demonstrate knowledge of rope types, their care, coiling and maintenance.
- Demonstrate understanding of the hazards and risks of lead climbing.
- Lead belay proficiently with appropriate selection of belay device
- Safely hold a leader fall.
- Lead climb fluidly clipping all quickdraws correctly
- Improve lead climbing ability by one grade
- Complete 30 lead climbs at F5a(5) or above
- Complete 30 lead belays
- Complete 10 top rope climbs at F5c(5+) or above

### **Level 5: Advanced Climber**

## National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme

### **Content:**

- Improved performance & training
- Sports injury avoidance and management
- Mental techniques for improved performance
- Competition climbing
- Taking falls and advanced belaying
- Spotting for bouldering
- Knowledge of climbing equipment ratings, impact forces, fall factors and the safety chain.
- Knots – bowline
- Knowledge of outdoor climbing
- UK climbing styles, ethics, history, and the Mountaineering Councils
- Options for the way ahead – branches of climbing, training courses, NGB awards, careers, information sources, the UK club system.

### **Assessment criteria:**

- Complete a minimum of 50 logged lead climbs –all at F6a or above - over three different climbing centres
- Demonstrate improvement of at least one grade in lead climbing.
- Complete a minimum of 10 logged top rope climbs at F6b or above
- Complete a minimum of 50 boulder problems showing progression
- Tie a bowline and stopper knot and understand its uses and limitations
- Demonstrate background knowledge on UK climbing history, issues, equipment and the Mountaineering Councils
- Prepare and deliver a short presentation on a climbing topic.
- Spot a climbing partner effectively on a bouldering wall
- Have participated in a climbing or bouldering competition.

## Guidance notes for Trainers and Assessors

### General

All climbing walls are different. There are many different designs and systems of management and operation in existence all over the UK. It is the responsibility of the individual Course Directors to design the detail of their own training and assessment procedures in the light of their site specific resources (including time duration, ratios, entry restrictions etc). However these guidelines seek to clarify the standards required at each level of the scheme and to promote what is currently the consensus on good practice in climbing centres.

### Logged climbs

Assessment criteria detailing the required number of climbs, boulder problems and grades achieved will be clear on the assessment log sheets. **All logged climbs need to be completed without assistance from the rope and without rests.** They may be pre-practiced in any fashion before being ascended in one push – to be logged as one climb. In the case of smaller walls that do not have many different routes the climbs may be repeated but the candidate should show improvement each time. The log requirements stated are for each level; climbs logged for a previous level may not be counted again for the next level. Direct entry candidates however, do not need to complete the previous level's log requirements but should be able to demonstrate the required proficiency to undertake the level that they wish to participate in.

As levels 1 and 2 are generally directly supervised by instructors the verification of logged climbs should be a simple affair. Climbs and boulder problems for levels 3-5 can be undertaken and logged unsupervised so verification is a more complex matter. Assessors need to satisfy themselves that the candidate has completed the minimum number of climbs in the spirit of the scheme. This may require some close questioning, cross referencing with climbing partners and/or other instructors. The purpose of the logged climbs/ problems is to consolidate skills and develop progression. An assessor can always ask a candidate to demonstrate their skills to substantiate their logged claims.

### Time commitment

Guidance for suggested minimum direct training input for each level is detailed below. Note that these are minimums and trainers may feel that their candidates may require more training to cover the syllabus sufficiently or to raise skill levels. Guidance is also given below as to the expected minimum time commitment by the candidate for each level. This includes instruction and consolidation and will vary widely depending upon the maturity and ability of each candidate. However this column is intended to indicate the level of commitment required at each level.

Level	Minimum hours of instruction	Expected minimum time commitment by candidate - hrs	Comments on consolidation period
1: Foundation	3	3	Direct instruction required
2: Top rope	4	8	Direct supervision required
3: Technical	4	20	Some hours used coaching
4: Lead	4	30	Initial direct instruction required
5: Advanced	6	40	Visits to 3 different walls required

### Grades

It is not in the philosophy of the scheme to exclude participants by stating minimum graded performance criteria for levels 1-3 as their focus is upon knowledge and skill acquisition. However grade targets are undeniably motivational and related to skill development. Therefore trainers and assessors should set realistic grade targets for candidates to achieve and enter into their log book for assessment. Trainers should inform candidates not to log up lots of easy routes just to complete levels quickly. Assessors need to check carefully that candidates have logged quality routes for their ability and may wish to set minimum grade standards for entry into the log book. Minimum graded performance criteria are given at level 4 for safety reasons and at level 5 to introduce performance training. Higher targets can be set by trainers/assessors.

## Level 1: Foundation Climber

### Overview

This is an entry level award for candidates who wish to learn skills and achieve at a very basic level. This level focuses on a safety conscious attitude as much as climbing skills. It is designed to be easily achievable by any climber with aptitude in a short space of time, whilst remaining under the supervision of an instructor at all times. Generally a minimum of two climbing sessions would be required to achieve this level.

### Training

#### **Safety briefing**

Trainers will need to stress the inherent hazards of climbing to candidates and judge whether these have been understood and appreciated. With minors an air of responsibility rather than play needs to be cultivated from the outset. Centre rules and expected behaviours need to be communicated and reinforced.

#### **Preparation**

Candidates need to be told about suitable clothing and footwear (rock shoes are not needed) as well as removing jewellery and tying back long hair.

#### **Equipment**

The correct method of putting on a harness and helmet should be explained though at this level some assistance with this is acceptable. Only one type of harness needs to be demonstrated (simple one-piece harnesses are good) but candidates must appreciate if it is being worn and buckled correctly. The harness belt should be around the waist, not the hips, and sufficiently tight. Leg loops should be appropriately adjusted. There should be no twists in the webbing and loose ends should be tucked away.

#### **Warm ups**

All candidates should participate in warm up exercises such as jogging on the spot, windmilling the arms etc. The reasons for this should be explained in a simple way. Stretching is not required at this level.

#### **Connection to the rope**

Candidates need to be taught where to connect the rope to the harness and how to tie a rethreaded figure of eight knot with a stopper knot. Considerable care will be needed to introduce this method at this level. There must be a tidy knot with a suitable length tail close to the harness with no loops created.

#### **Belaying**

Belaying at this level is only to be done under direct supervision. Any appropriate belay system may be used as long as it is efficient and safe. Tailing/backing up is acceptable but candidates should be able to manage an appropriate device (which could be an auto-locking device) on their own or with a peer under supervision. It is not expected for candidates to be fully competent for all situations nor to be totally independent. They must demonstrate a consistent safe attitude and awareness of the responsibility and skill required. Any successful peer belaying session where the trainer/assessor does not have to intervene should be seen as adequate for this level. If a candidate is mature enough to be taught to belay independently then this should be done if appropriate. Lowering of the climber does not have to be mastered at this level. This can be done, or be backed up, by the trainer.

#### **Descending**

Candidates should be taught how to descend correctly whilst being lowered by a belayer/ instructor. They should lean back holding only their end of the rope and walk down the wall.

#### **Climbing movement**

Candidates should be introduced to the most rudimentary principles of climbing movement: standing up straight and trying to maintain balance, looking at their feet when finding footholds, pushing up with the legs and relaxing.

## **Bouldering**

If the climbing centre has a bouldering facility then its safe use could be introduced. Attention should be drawn to the risks of bouldering and minors participating at this level should always be supervised. Fall zones and safe descents should be highlighted. As this is statistically the highest risk activity with minors at a climbing centre, due care and attention should be paid to the briefing and supervision of candidates. Simple traverses are often the most appropriate activity at this level. Spotting is an advanced skill that is only introduced much later at level 5 in the scheme. It is not recommended to introduce this skill to youngsters at this stage.

## **Assessment**

Assessment may take the form of continuous assessment during training. At this level assessors can exercise considerable latitude in their judgement of a candidate's ability to satisfy the assessment criteria. This level is designed to enthuse and encourage participants to pursue climbing further rather than be a difficult hurdle. A positive and responsible attitude displayed by the candidate is just as important as any technical skill demonstrated.

Assessors should look for a candidate who can follow instructions willingly and consistently, can maintain concentration and work cooperatively with their peers. See the training notes for specific guidance on belaying standards.

Some simple questions on safety and centre rules, followed by a gearing up and warming up session, then a group bottom roping session with maybe a short bouldering exercise should suffice for an assessment. Bouldering is not a required activity for assessment however if facilities do not exist.

### **Assessment log components:**

- Awareness of safety rules and hazards
- Put on harness and helmet correctly
- Tie a retied figure of eight knot with stopper knot
- Climb a chosen route with confidence
- Descend from a route correctly
- Belay safely under supervision
- Demonstrate consistent safe behaviour
- Complete 10 climbs of any grade (rainbow)
- Complete 10 belays

## **Level 2: Top Rope Climber**

### **Overview**

This level is a key stage in a climber's development. It is designed to correspond to most climbing centre's 'membership' standards. A level 2 holder should be a potentially independent top rope climber and boulderer. The BMC participation statement should be communicated to candidates and their parents/guardians if under 18. Some climbing centres may allow minors of a suitable age who have achieved this level to climb independently at their centre (with parental consent) or under some form of supervision. Consequently the assessment of this level needs to be much more rigorous than at level 1.

Many candidates may wish to purchase their own harness, belay device and rock shoes during or after this course and trainers need to equip them with the necessary knowledge to do this.

## Training

### **Tying into the harness**

Candidates need to understand how to tie into both a one piece and two piece harness (ie: with or without an abseil loop). The basic designs of a harness need to be explained along with their suitability for indoor climbing. In particular different harness buckle systems should be examined and their merits and weaknesses described.

### **Pre-climb checks**

Candidates should be taught the importance of pre-climb checks and the common problems to look out for: twisted harnesses, loose or incorrectly adjusted harness, buckle systems not correctly doubled back or functioning properly They should tie in correctly with a long tail and stopper knot, with no loops and the knot close to the body. Karabiners should be screwed up (use a squeeze test), the belay device correctly threaded, orientated and appropriate for use. Candidates should be able to tie in another climber and correctly check their knot and harness.

### **Belaying**

Candidates should be taught to belay correctly with a non-autolocking device. Other devices can be introduced including auto-locking devices for comparison but advice as to the most appropriate for use in this context should be given. (Gri Gris are not recommended at this stage as their use is counter-intuitive to standard belay devices and their lowering action is more difficult to control.) The belaying action needs to be of a high standard with a good degree of anticipation exhibited by the belayer. In particular the following points should be highlighted:

- Correct stance and position (not too far out from the wall)
- Correct attachment and orientation of belay device with the dead rope exiting the bottom of the device or to the side of the braking hand.
- The principle of a 180° lock off on the rope
- Taking in the rope with one hand always on the brake rope
- Brake rope held in front of the body – not to one side (in abseil position)
- Keeping the dead rope locked off as much as possible
- Keeping hands in front of the rope – not passing them between the body and the rope
- Smooth belaying action
- Lowering with both hands held onto the brake rope at all times – no swapping of hands
- Smooth lowering at a safe speed.

### **Ground anchors**

Candidates need to know what to do if their climbing partner is of a significantly different weight to them. Trainers should introduce them to the options in ground anchor systems such as ground slings and ballast bags. The pros and cons of these should be discussed. Candidates also need to be able to assess the suitability of a belay system to suit the weight and frictional dynamics of the climber/rope/anchor systems they find themselves in. They also need to be able to judge if the situation is too difficult to belay safely.

### **Holding falls**

Practical experience in holding a top rope fall is invaluable to give candidates the feedback they need to make decisions detailed above. All practice falls must be done with an instructor backing up the belayer until deemed ready to do it safely without back-up. Falls should not be big; there should be very little slack rope – just enough to show that the system works.

### **Communication**

Traditional climbing calls are inappropriate on most artificial climbing structures. However a clear process of communication between partners and awareness of the climber's needs on behalf of the belayer should be developed.

### **Grades**

The French sport grading system (most commonly adopted in climbing walls) should be explained and candidates encouraged to determine their current climbing ability through choosing and attempting routes of various grades.

### **Climbing technique**

Candidates should be coached in elementary climbing movement and technique: using holds in an efficient manner, having an upright relaxed stance with heels dropped, concentrating on good foot placement, planning moves before execution and moving smoothly in balance using the leg muscles and resting on straight arms. Climbing shoes are not necessary at this level but would be highly desirable to teach proper footwork at this early and influential stage. The concept of balance and coordinated movement are fundamental here. Climbing games on a bouldering wall or exercises on the wall to develop basic technique can be of great benefit.

### **Bouldering**

It is highly desirable that candidates should be introduced to bouldering at this stage. Instructors should attempt to provide low level traverses on their climbing wall if they do not have a purpose made bouldering facility. Candidates need to be taught the appropriate skills to become safe and effective independent boulderers. Safe heights, correct attire, climbing within one's limits, awareness of other users, controlled descent, selection of appropriate problems and a simple explanation of sports injury avoidance should be covered.

### **Assessment**

Candidates need to be faultless and consistent in the basic skills of putting on equipment, tying on, belaying, lowering and communicating with their partner. In particular the emphasis of this level is on sound and safe belaying. Assessors should be looking for someone who they would be happy to leave alone to top rope with a competent peer. (However centres will have their own policies as to whether this may actually happen with minors of various ages).

Candidates need to have developed sound risk awareness in the climbing wall environment and have a mature and careful attitude to safety.

If there are no dedicated bouldering facilities at the climbing centre the award can still be gained though it would be highly beneficial to have experience of this activity. If there are bouldering facilities candidates need to have developed a safe approach to the activity and be able to seek out their own problems.

### **Assessment log components:**

- Connect rope to harness with retied figure 8 and stopper knot consistently
- Consistently performs pre-climb checks
- Can hold a simple top rope fall
- Belays consistently correctly
- Lowers a climber consistently correctly
- Communicates well with climber
- Understanding of French sport grades and selection of appropriate routes
- Safe and effective use of a bouldering/ traversing wall
- Complete 25 set climbs of any grade
- Complete 25 belays

## Level 3: Technical Climber

### Overview

This level concentrates on climbing technique and movement with some additional knowledge on equipment. Bouldering is a key component of this level and a suitable venue that provides a wide range of bouldering challenges is essential to deliver both training and assessment. Traditionally there has been very little input of this area into instructor training in the UK and trainers may feel they need additional support before passing on these skills to others. It is recommended that trainers should attend a formal coaching course such as the BMC's FUNdamentals course or an in-house course designed by a suitably experienced Technical Advisor. Many articles, books and DVDs have been produced on this subject (see appendix) and a Technical Advisor should be able to lend advice if necessary. It is hoped that as well as formerly teaching technique and movement, trainers will be able to coach candidates individually to some degree, in order to motivate them and develop their climbing potential.

### Training

#### Equipment

A more in-depth look at climbing equipment should help candidates think about the systems that support their performance. Candidates should be introduced to different harness designs, their pros and cons, suitability for different uses, care and maintenance. They should also be taught how to evaluate their condition for use. Types of rock shoes, construction and fitting should be covered as well as the various chalk options that are used for increasing friction on the hands. The possible health and environmental problems of using chalk indoors and outdoors should be discussed. Helmet design and their appropriate use should be discussed.

#### Knots

Candidates should learn how to tie all the knots listed in the syllabus and understand their uses, characteristics and limitations. These knots are introduced here as they can be used for ground anchors, attachments and safety back ups in addition to the retied figure of eight.

#### Belaying

Candidates should be introduced to a wide variety of belay devices that are suitable and commonly used on climbing walls. They should be able to evaluate their frictional properties and understand how the whole belay system depends upon rope, device and karabiner properties. They should be given practical experience in using these devices and be able to evaluate and choose an appropriate device for their use. Gri Gris or similar devices may be introduced at this stage though they are not recommended for unsupervised use for the reasons given earlier. The correct use of these and the hazards of lowering too fast should be explained carefully.

#### Climbing techniques

Candidates should be introduced to the wide array of techniques that are available to the modern climber in using the available holds on a climb. A list of suggested techniques are detailed below:

Hand holds: *Crimp, half-crimp, hang, slopers, pockets, pinch, jams*

Hold orientations: *Side-pull, 'gastons', under-cuts*

Footholds: *Edge, smear, pocket, heel hook, toe hook*

Basic moves: *laybacking, chimneying, palming, bridging, mantleshelfing, rockovers, cross-throughs, twisting, flagging, foot-swapping, knee bars, arm bars, 'frog' position, deadpointing, dynos, resting (with the use of opposing forces, straight arms, relaxed grip)*

Trainers will need to choose those that are appropriate to the candidate's ability and applicable to the facility in which they are working. These techniques are best introduced at ground level on a bouldering wall where candidates can observe the trainer and their peers close up. The bouldering wall is an excellent venue for coaching. Later the techniques can be applied on routes.

### **Movement skills**

As well as teaching individual techniques, trainers need to train good movement skills to their candidates. Full guidance on this is beyond the scope of this handbook but key principles that need to be covered are listed below:

- Maintaining balance and an awareness of one's centre of gravity
- Reading moves ahead
- Accurate and controlled footwork
- Full use of legs and feet for propulsion
- Fluidity of movement – moving in balance
- Use of opposing forces for balance
- Relaxed grip and posture (use of the skeleton)
- Ability to spot rests and use correct resting style
- Assuming correct body position for movement off holds
- Use of body tension and core strength on steep ground
- Position of the hips close to wall on steep ground
- Correct breathing – aerobic/ anaerobic

Reference to supporting materials on technique and performance training can be found in the appendices. It is important that candidates are introduced to the techniques and principles early on and then coached both on the bouldering wall and on routes. The use of multi-move circuits on a simple bouldering wall or training board can be a very useful tool. The aim is to develop smooth coordinated movement that candidates can transfer to boulder problems and climbing routes.

### **Consolidation**

Candidates will need considerable time to practice and develop these techniques on both the bouldering wall and on routes. This is reflected in the time commitment required at this level. Candidates need to be advised to log up quality routes for their ability rather than to race through any number of easy routes. Minimum grades can be set by instructors to achieve this.

### **Session structure**

Trainers should include in their programme a clear structure to a climbing session so that candidates can attain their best performance and avoid injury. (The BMC issues a poster to cover the basic principles of this). The importance of warming up and stretching correctly before a performance climbing session should be emphasised, as well as climbing to a peak and warming down and resting to allow the body to recover. Much more stress will come onto fingers and tendons at this level and specific advice on warming up these areas and guarding against injury should be given.

### **Background knowledge**

Finally candidates should be encouraged to explore the world of climbing beyond the particular centre that they are registered with. Trainers should introduce candidates to popular climbing websites, and at least one climbing film. A suggested list of websites is to be found in the appendix.

### **Assessment**

Now that candidates should be able to operate at an independent or remotely supervised level, assessors do not need to witness all their climbing. The logged climbs and boulder problems can be done by the candidate independently as long as their maximum performance has been observed and recorded at the beginning and end of the consolidation period.

Candidates need to demonstrate that they have improved their performance by one full grade (eg: from F6a to F6a+) on top roped climbs over the whole consolidation period. Assessors need to check that candidates have logged routes matched to their ability. Candidates should not log up many easy routes quickly just to satisfy the requirements.

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Boulder problems are difficult to grade objectively across centres but the assessor must satisfy themselves that the candidate's performance has improved. If a centre has its own grading system for bouldering this will be relatively easy.

Candidates need to demonstrate knowledge of a range of climbing techniques and be able to apply appropriate ones in various climbing contexts. They should be able to demonstrate the skilful execution of a range of these. It is suggested that the assessor should ask the candidate to demonstrate five named techniques from the syllabus list on a bouldering wall or a route. The assessor should make sure that these techniques are applicable on the climbing surfaces available. If a candidate fails to understand or perform a particular technique they should be given up to three alternative techniques to demonstrate before the assessment is terminated for that session.

Finally a quick informal interview should ascertain whether the candidate has watched a climbing film and visited two websites as required. For both the candidate needs to demonstrate that they have learnt from these experiences. For the film they should be able to give some simple analysis of the performance they watched – What made the climber so good? What techniques did they employ? How motivated did they appear? The website search can be used to research some relevant climbing knowledge – location of other climbing walls, competitions, news items, equipment reviews etc.

### **Assessment log components:**

- Complete a minimum of 30 logged top rope climbs.
- Demonstrate progression of at least one full grade on top roped climbs
- Have knowledge of and demonstrate the use of three different belay devices
- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of basic indoor climbing equipment
- Demonstrate and explain 5 warming up exercises
- Complete a minimum of 20 boulder problems demonstrating improvement.
- Demonstrate and explain 5 different climbing techniques.
- Tie figure 8 on the bight, overhand knot and clove hitch
- Watch and describe a climbing film/video.
- Visit two climbing related websites and retrieve requested information

## Level 4: Lead Climber

### Overview

This level introduces candidates to lead climbing with all its attendant risks and required skills. Candidates who gain this level should be capable of lead climbing to their limit and in control at most lead climbing walls in the UK. Minimum performance grades are introduced at this level as it is felt that a certain level of physical ability is required to lead safely on steep routes that are less likely to lead to injury in case of a fall. Lead climbing carries higher risks and responsibilities for both climber and belayer and trainers and assessors need to be aware of the increased levels of risk assessment needed for both teaching and performing this activity. The SPA, CWA and most site-specific instructor schemes do not cover the teaching of lead climbing, therefore the advice from a Technical Advisor and the institution of proper procedures derived from a risk assessment are essential here. Specific consent for the activity of lead climbing to under 18s should be obtained from parents/guardians of participants.

### Training

#### **Hazards**

Trainers should explain the potential hazards of lead climbing at the beginning of any course. (The consequences of a spinning hold become much more significant for example.) The BMC statement and the BMC's Parent's Guide could be re-communicated to candidates in this context and their parents/guardians if appropriate.

### **The rope**

The role of the rope in climbing systems should be discussed. This needs to cover the construction, strengths, uses and shock absorbing properties of fully dynamic ropes, low stretch gym ropes and static ropes. They should also be taught to appreciate the difference between different diameter single ropes. Candidates should be taught how to coil a rope using lap coils and the use of rope bags. They should also be taught to inspect the rope for damage and handling quality and be able to judge its condition for use and suitability for a given indoor climbing activity. Care and maintenance of the rope needs to be discussed also. Recommendations for buying ropes for indoor leading could be made at this point.

### **Quickdraws**

The use, selection and racking of quickdraws on the harness should be covered. Many walls have in-situ quickdraws on their lead wall but candidates need to be introduced to the use of loose quickdraws also. Different designs and their pros and cons should be covered (bent and straight gates, solid and wired gates, captive snap karabiners, length of extender, crabs with pulleys etc). The care, maintenance and retirement of karabiners and tapes should be discussed.

### **Warm ups**

The approach to a lead climbing session should be covered with an emphasis on warming up both physically and mentally before lead climbing near or at personal upper limits. Top roping and red pointing can help here.

### **Lead belaying**

Lead belaying requires a much more attentive and active approach than top roping and trainers should reinforce this by emphasising the following points:

- The belayer should always pay attention to their climber
- The belayer should stand in a braced position ready to move or resist movement quickly.
- The belayer should stand close to the wall and to one side of the leader at the beginning.
- Little slack should be played out until the third clip.
- At this point the belayer can step back a little and leave more slack in the system. Above the third clip it may be better to let the climber fall a little further and avoid slamming them into the wall.
- The belayer should anticipate the climber's need for more or less rope and pay out or take in accordingly. Ideally the climber should never feel the pull of the rope, even while clipping.
- After the third clip the belayer can step forwards and backwards to help pay the correct amount of rope out or take in.
- The belayer should pay careful attention to see if the climber has clipped the lower off properly before taking in slack to support the climber before lowering.

Candidates should be given experience of belaying with a variety of belay devices and critically evaluate their use. They should be taught to belay with non-auto locking devices but may also be introduced to the correct use of auto-locking devices such as the Gri Gri.

### **Holding leader falls**

Acceptable lead belaying requires that the belayer can hold a leader fall. This should be practiced in a highly controlled environment taking due care for all the participants' safety including other centre users. A small fall with the climber close to a clipped quickdraw should be taken with the trainer backing up the belay. This will give the candidate some indication of the forces that are typically involved in a leader fall. It should be explained that taking in slack during a fall is poor practice as it will result in the climber slamming into the wall and increases fall factors. Dynamic belaying is beyond the scope of this level. A discussion on relative weights of partners and the use of ground anchors may be useful at this point.

### **Lead climbing**

Teaching lead climbing should be done in incremental stages. Ideally a classroom session at ground level should first cover the technique of clipping the rope into running belays correctly from rest. This should cover good body position and resting on a straight arm, one handed clipping technique, clipping lower off anchors and the hazards of back-clipping and z-clipping. Clipping should never be done whilst moving, especially with rope held in the teeth.

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From here lead climbing can be practiced on easy routes with an additional slack top rope until the basic procedures have been absorbed. From there climbers may proceed without a top rope but with the trainer providing back up on the belay. Eventually the trainer must judge when it is safe to step back and supervise/coach indirectly. There must be little risk of the climber falling off in the early stages of training. The instructor should choose appropriate routes for teaching carefully, balancing fall potential with the consequences of such a fall.

### **Checks and communication**

Throughout the session pre-climb checks and the importance of good observation and communication between climbing partners should be reinforced.

### **Assessment**

Whilst lead climbing candidates must climb smoothly and clip running belays from rest without fumbling or lunging. The climb does not have to be done on sight but does need to be ascended without rests on the rope.

Assessors need to look for consistent and suitably skilled lead belayers that they would be happy to be belayed by on a hard climb! If you would be happy for them to belay you when you know you may take a leader fall then they are good enough.

Candidates also need to climb at F5c(5+) standard on top rope. Again this does not have to be on sight but must be ascended without rests and with no assistance from the rope.

### **Assessment log components**

- Demonstrate knowledge of rope types, their care, coiling and maintenance.
- Demonstrate understanding of the hazards and risks of lead climbing.
- Lead belay proficiently with appropriate selection of belay device
- Safely hold a leader fall.
- Lead climb fluidly clipping all quickdraws correctly
- Improve lead climbing ability by one grade
- Complete 30 lead climbs at F5a(5) or above
- Complete 30 lead belays
- Complete 10 top rope climbs at F5c(5+) or above

## Level 5: Advanced Climber

### **Overview**

The emphasis of this level is to focus on improved performance and knowledge of the wider world of climbing. This level will not be achievable by all candidates. A holder of this level will have achieved a high level of performance, knowledge and motivation through considerable effort over many months. Anyone achieving this level may naturally be looking beyond the bounds of wall climbing and bouldering to greater challenges in the world of climbing. For this reason both trainers and assessors working on this level need to have a considerable breadth and depth of experience of rock climbing in all its disciplines to be able to inform and motivate candidates. Trainers need to possess well developed coaching skills and would normally have had experience of leading routes both indoors and outdoors at F6b standard or above.

Training for performance is a complex area with particular risks for young climbers who are more prone to injuries, burnout and post-viral fatigue if they do not rest sufficiently. Great care should therefore be taken in advising on a training programme for them. It is beyond the scope of these guidelines to give full details of training programmes though there are some good sources of information listed in the appendix. The ABCTT will provide trainer workshops for this course.

At this level instructors will often be acting as coaches and so providing a rigid training structure is unlikely to be appropriate. The provision of coaching is underdeveloped in climbing at present and it is hoped that the guidance for this level will develop over time as coaching develops in the sport. The ABCTT hopes to post downloadable guidance and resources on its website as they become available. Below are some suggested areas for coaching more advanced technique and training but the experience of the trainer and coaching needs of the participant will determine the exact coaching undertaken.

### **Technique**

Revisit level 3 techniques and movement principles

Advanced techniques for steep routes: *Twist-locking, outside edges, drop-knees, flagging, deadpointing, use of slopers, low percentage jumps.*

Advanced movement skills: *Breathing, move memory, kinaesthetic awareness, route reading from the floor*

### **Tactics**

The differing tactics of onsighting and redpointing could be explained and coached as appropriate.

### **Training for performance**

Training programmes should be discussed using the following criteria as a guideline:

*Strength/Power training:* Appropriate bouldering (steep walls with small holds), pull-up bar work and body tension exercises, campus boards (\* see warning below), system training.

*Power endurance and Stamina training:* Interval training on routes and/ or circuits

*Antagonist training:* weights or floor exercises for 'opposition' muscles

*Cardiovascular fitness:* supportive aerobic / cross training (running etc)

*Flexibility:* stretching exercises

*Basic periodised training principles:* Peaking and use of prioritised training cycles to target goals and/ or weaknesses. Rest phases, pre-phase conditioning and post-phase tapering.

Basic nutritional guidelines and the importance of hydration should be discussed

The candidate's performance should be analysed and actions suggested for improvement. The focus should be on improving technique through climbing and bouldering regularly. The use of top roping, leading, bouldering, multi-move circuit training and the study of other climbers' performances should be used to achieve this.

Great care should be taken with coaching young climbers for performance. Soft tissues and joints often have not fully developed and irreparable damage can occur if they are pushed to far. Tendons, in particular, take far longer than muscles to build up and intensive exercises on these (such as finger boards and campusing) put huge strains on them. Advice should be given on safe training such as:

- Do not create high muscle and joint forces (such as with full body dynos)
- Allow sufficient rest between training sessions
- Slow, low-intensity exercise is best
- Do not make movements repetitive
- Keep cool and hydrated
- Climb on a variety of surfaces and angles
- Mix up the training – do not be too specific or intense (such as using fingerboards).

### **Sports injuries**

The topic of sports injuries should be covered in a non-technical way. Candidates need to know the common injuries to fingers, elbows, shoulders, back, and ankles that climbing hard and falling create. They need to know how to minimise the likelihood of them occurring and how best to manage simple injuries (eg: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation, followed by nutritional supplements, massage, stretching and gentle exercise to break down scar tissue). The use of taping fingers and supports for weakened tendons should be covered.

### **Mental training**

Some time should be spent looking at mental techniques to improve performance. Relaxation and focusing techniques are important tools for achieving higher performance. Trainers may wish to introduce techniques from disciplines such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming, yoga or visualisation strategies. Candidates should participate in at least one bouldering and one lead competition to experience the mental support and pressures that these create.

### **Taking falls**

Anxiety of falling should be addressed if it is holding back a candidate's performance. Some of the mental strategies mentioned above may help with this but a process of taking controlled falls may help also. The ability of a candidate to push to their physical limit and then relax while in flight without grabbing at holds, ropes or quickdraws should be addressed. Trainers who can give dynamic belays will help this process. Careful risk assessment should be done when planning larger falls on the lead. These should always take place on a steep and high section of the wall.

### **Dynamic belaying**

Good lead belaying requires a dynamic element if the leader is not to slam into the climbing wall. Trainers must exercise extremely good judgement as to whether it is appropriate to introduce this skill to individual candidates. Done well it reduces risk, done badly it increases risk. Trainers need to make sure that candidates have the correct attitude and sufficient maturity to be trained in this skill. Dynamic belaying does not mean competition belaying where large amounts of rope are allowed to pass through the belay device upon a fall. It means that sufficient slack should be paid out and the movement of the belayer's body should be enough to allow the climber to drop more vertically and come to a decelerated rest. Candidates should be taught when and at what appropriate climber's height dynamic belaying should be used.

### **Bouldering**

Candidates should be introduced to the technique of spotting in bouldering. Care should be taken to adopt a correct stance, correct position relative to the boulderer, correct movement to guide a falling boulderer and to know the effective limits of spotting.

### **Equipment**

The concept of the safety chain should be introduced to the candidates with a simple explanation of impact forces, fall factors, equipment ratings and the successive absorption of energy by the system. They should have a simple understanding of CE marking of PPE. Candidates should be introduced to an outdoor leading rack and have its basic uses explained.

### **Knots**

The use of a bowline for tying in to the rope should be covered with its characteristics, benefits and weaknesses explained, whilst emphasising the importance of a stopper knot.

### **Knowledge of outdoor climbing**

Candidates are expected to have an appreciation of rock climbing on real rock and to understand how it differs from wall climbing. Trainers should place indoor climbing and its development into the wider context of the UK climbing scene. This could take the form of a discussion, sharing experiences, a slide presentation, the use of film or a practical session outdoors if appropriate. Candidates do not need to be taught *how* to rock climb on natural crags as this is beyond the remit of the scheme. Advice could be given as to suitable courses/ ways of gaining experience for motivated candidates who wish to progress beyond the scheme. Trainers should explain the difference between sport and traditional climbing.

### **Background knowledge**

Candidates at this level need to know more about the background and context of UK climbing. Trainers should explain the styles, ethics and history of the rich variety of climbing to be had in the UK and abroad. Slide shows and videos could help with this. The UK grading system should be explained. Candidates should also be introduced to the role of the relevant home nation Mountaineering Council.

### **The way ahead**

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Finally candidates should be advised about the options for the way ahead. Further training courses, the competition scene, National Governing Body instructor awards, careers in climbing related industries, the UK club system and information sources should all be discussed.

### Assessment

The main requirements to gaining the level are to complete the stipulated log book experience. The log book requirements are stated clearly in the syllabus and assessment criteria section. Candidates are expected to have lead climbed at a minimum of two other climbing walls during their consolidation period. Assessors need to examine the log book carefully and to quiz the candidates on its contents to establish its veracity. If there is any doubt about levels of performance assessors should ask to observe the candidate climb or boulder an appropriate route. Candidates would be expected to climb fluidly to their limit and take a leader fall (not rest) at this level.

In addition to this assessors need to quiz candidates on their knowledge of the background to UK climbing as described in the training section above. This should be done by written paper and is an important component at this level. It may be appropriate to set this task as a home paper to encourage the candidate to research and broaden their knowledge. If necessary assistance in reading questions and writing answers may be given by the assessor – this is not a test of written English.

Candidates should also prepare and deliver a short presentation on a topic related to the level 5 syllabus of about ten minutes duration. Considerable latitude as to the format should be given. A practical demonstration, a talk, an essay, a film, a slide or powerpoint presentation are all acceptable. At the end they should be able to answer questions related to their presentation. The purpose of the presentation is to assess the candidate's understanding of the training process that they have undergone at this level. Presentation skills are not to be assessed – just the content.

A poor performance on these tasks may require the candidate to repeat all or part of the exercise.

#### **Assessment log components:**

- Tie a bowline and stopper knot
- Pass a written test on climbing general knowledge
- Prepare and deliver a presentation on a climbing topic
- Spot a climbing partner effectively on a bouldering wall
- Participate in a climbing or bouldering competition
- Complete 50 lead climbs at F6a or above using 3 climbing centres
- Improve leading ability by at least one full grade
- Complete 10 top rope climbs at F6b or above
- Complete 50 boulder problems showing progression

## Appendices

### 1. Summary of log book requirements

Level	Top rope climbs	Belays	Boulder problems	Lead climbs	Other
1: Foundation	10	10	-	-	-
2: Top rope	25	25	some	-	-
3: Technical	30	-	20	-	Progress one full grade on top rope
4: Lead	10 at F5c (F5+) or above	30 lead belays	-	30 at F5a (F5) or above	-
5: Advanced	10 at F6b or above	-	50 showing progression	50 at F6a or above - using three different climbing walls	Progress one full grade on the lead. Experience of competition climbing

## 2. Level 5 background paper

Suggested topics for questions:

- Sport/Trad ethics
- Grades
- Climbing technique and tactics
- The Mountaineering Councils and ABC
- Clubs
- Competition climbing
- Accessing climbing wall info
- Accessing crag/ rock climbing info
- Rock types/ style of climbing
- Instructing qualifications and the Mountain Training Boards
- The safety chain and basic fall factor theory
- Climbing equipment and PPE ratings
- Safe training and managing sports injuries
- Types of rope and impact forces
- Equipment design and life spans
- Climbing terms
- Climbing literature and websites

Level 5 assessment – sample written paper:

1. What is the difference between a redpoint and an onsight ascent?
2. Explain the difference between climbs with grades F6b and E3 5b.
3. List three things that the BMC does for climbers.
4. Where could you get information about climbing walls in your area?
5. What are the BRYCS? How could you get involved in them?
6. If you wanted to start climbing on rock what could you do to learn the skills?
7. Name 3 websites that could give you information about climbing in the UK.
8. What is a CWA? How could you become one?
9. Why might a 5 metre fall 20 metres up a climb be less serious than the same fall when only 10 metres up the same route?
10. The figures: 22kN may be stamped on a karabiner. What does this mean?
11. How would you treat an injured finger tendon?
12. What type of rope would you recommend a novice climber to buy for indoor climbing?
13. How do you know when to retire your harness?
14. What is a 'dyno'? What are the risks of doing one?
15. Name two climbing magazines and two classic climbing books.
16. List three things you can do to help prevent getting a climbing sports injury?
17. What is the highest confirmed sport grade in the world at the moment?
18. Name five climbing walls in the UK where you can lead climb.
19. What's the difference between stamina and power and how do you train for each?
20. List four different types of climbing you can do outdoors.

### 3. Training materials and workshops

Training articles by Neil Gresham on [www.planetfear.com](http://www.planetfear.com)

BMC FUNdamentals workshops – see BMC website

BMC climbing technique articles and films – see BMC website

Training materials can be downloaded from the NICAS website as they become available.

NICAS Course Director workshops, technical advice and coaching courses may be provided by the following ABC Primary Centres:

- *Undercover Rock, Bristol*
- *Calshot Climbing Wall, Fawley*
- *Mile End Wall, London*
- *The Glasgow Climbing Centre*
- *The Leeds Climbing Wall*
- *The Beacon Climbing Centre, Caernarfon*
- *Dynamic Rock, Swansea*
- *The Redpoint Centre, Birmingham*
- *Rock City, Hull*
- *The Edge, Sheffield*
- *The Tower Climbing Centre, Leicester*
- *Avertical World, Dundee*
- *Ardur OAC, Shoreham-by-Sea*
- *Kendall Wall, Cumbria*
- *The Foundry, Sheffield*
- *Westway Sports Centre, London*
- *The Mill, South Molton*
- *Ratho, Edinburgh*
- *Northwest Face, Warrington*
- *ClimbUK, Rochdale*
- *Manchester Climbing Centre*
- *Rope Race, Marple*

*These centres can provide log books, information, advice and training for all levels of NICAS*

*Full details of the Primary Centres can be found on the NICAS website: [www.nicas.co.uk](http://www.nicas.co.uk)*

#### 4. Bibliography

##### **Training and instruction**

Training for Rock Climbing.	Bollen S (1994) Pelham Books
Performance Rock Climbing.	Goddard D and Neumann U. Stackpole Books
Rock Climbing.	Peter L (2004) MLTUK
Climbing Fit.	Hurn M and Ingle P. Crowood Press
Masterclass Part 1: Technique and Training.	Gresham N (2005) Crux films - DVD
Masterclass Part 2: Skills and Tactics for Sport and Trad.	Gresham N (2005) Crux films– DVD
Gym Climb!	Long J. Chockstone Press
Belaying: Get it Right!	BMC
Performance Training	BMC
Climbing Outside	BMC (2005)
One Move Too Many: how to understand the injuries and overuse syndromes of rock climbing	Hochholzer T and Schoeffl V. (2003)
Sport Climb +.	Rockfax publications Berry A and McClure S.

##### **Instructing schemes & guidelines**

Site Specific Climbing Wall Guidance Notes.	MLTE (2003)
Rock Climbing for Instructors.	Richardson A (2001) The Crowood Press
Get a Grip. Health and Safety at Indoor Climbing Walls	HSE VHS video
National Guidelines	MLTUK (2004)
Climbing for All - Disability Awareness in Rock Climbing	MLTE/Don Mabbs (MLTE 2007)
Young People Climbing, Hill Walking, Mountaineering: A Parent's Guide	BMC (2006)
Climbing Wall Manual	BMC (2008)

##### **Equipment**

Care and Maintenance	BMC (2000)
Choice, care & maintenance of pooled equipment	BMC (2006)

##### **General**

BMC Summit magazine, Scottish Mountaineer  
Climb, Climber and Vertical magazines

5. Useful websites

NICAS: [www.nicas.co.uk](http://www.nicas.co.uk)

ABC: [www.abcclimbingwalls.co.uk](http://www.abcclimbingwalls.co.uk)

BMC: [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

MC of S: [www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk](http://www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk)

MLTUK: [www.mltuk.org](http://www.mltuk.org)

MLTE: [www.mlte.org](http://www.mlte.org)

MLTW: [www.mltw.org](http://www.mltw.org)

AMI: [www.ami.org.uk](http://www.ami.org.uk)

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

CWMA: [www.cwma.co.uk](http://www.cwma.co.uk)

UK Climbing: [www.ukclimbing.com](http://www.ukclimbing.com)

Planet Fear: [www.planetfear.com](http://www.planetfear.com)

Rockfax: [www.rockfax.com](http://www.rockfax.com)

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