

Meeting International Standards Seminar 27-29 June 2003 Le Tour, Chamonix, France

Report by Andrew Friedemann

Summary of the second UIAA Meeting International Standards Seminar
hosted by the UIAA Training Standards Working Group and Federations des Clubs Alpin Francais at
Chalet Le Tour, Le Tour, Chamonix France.



Introduction

The UIAA Training Standards Group under the leadership of Martin Doyle of the BMC/UKMTB in the absence of John Cousins (due to a lost passport), presented a very worthwhile training standards symposium at which 30 members representing 21 countries were present. Predominantly based in the CAF Le Tour chalet, the discussions were moved out to the surrounding mountain areas on occasion for practical implementation of training ideas.

Preface by John Cousins

UIAA Model Standards for Voluntary Leaders

The UIAA is concerned to promote mountain training as an important aspect of the development of mountaineering and has given responsibility for this to its Mountaineering Commission, working in collaboration with member Federations and other organisations as appropriate.

The Commission is frequently asked by member Federations for advice about mountain training standards and methods. It has accordingly put forward international model standards as defining current accepted good practice among a number of member Federations with considerable experience of mountain training programmes for voluntary leaders. The Commission hopes that this may provide a basis on which it may advise those requiring assistance and suggests to such member Federations that they take these standards into account in setting up or revising the training programmes for which they have responsibility.

If the standards are followed widely by member Federations, this might gradually encourage widespread international acceptance of the UIAA model standards as defining accepted good practice in mountain training, while leaving total discretion to member Federations to apply them in their own countries as they wish. The UIAA believe that the existence of such international standards will help to ensure a uniform minimum standard of good practice beneficial both to the leaders concerned and those undergoing instruction or being led.

The UIAA also believes that it would be desirable for there to be a system of mutual recognition of these standard leader qualifications between members of the UIAA so that voluntary leaders trained in one member country, in accordance with the model standards, may operate freely in other member countries. This would bring obvious benefits in facilitating mountaineering by voluntary groups in different countries and regions, and thus support UIAA objectives of encouraging international mountaineering. The Commission recognises that this may need time to develop, in consultation with member Federations, taking account of legal issues.

The present standards cover the following main qualifications for voluntary mountain leaders or instructors:

- Mountain-walking
- Rock-climbing
- High-Alpine mountaineering
- Mountain ski-touring

The UIAA Mountaineering Commission would be pleased to add further standards as necessary to meet the needs of member Federations.

It is emphasised that the standards apply only to voluntary leaders and that professional guides, instructors and leaders may have additional requirements. In a case where a member Federation wishes to use or develop one of the present proposed model standards for professional use, it should first consult the UIAA Mountaineering Commission or the relevant professional organisation.

The UIAA is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all people taking part in climbing and mountaineering. Training Schemes will be expected to demonstrate a positive attitude towards equal opportunities.

Opening Address

Martin Doyle began the seminar by welcoming everyone to the Chamonix valley and the French Alpine Club's Chalet in le Tour. He explained that this event was the second such event for the UIAA, bringing together experts for practical and theoretical discussion on the best practices needed to train and assess leaders and instructors.

The aims of the seminar were simple:

- To learn from each representative of the training schemes available in their countries and the training methods used to deliver these schemes.
- To hear something of the work of the UIAA and to consider how it can continue to assist federations.
- To make progress in giving approval to federations' training programmes
- To identify useful training resources and identify what further work needs to be done by the UIAA or by individual Federations.

The meeting was intended to be partly practical and for this reason had been limited to thirty delegates. The location of the seminar in the Chamonix valley of France meant that the group had access to a broad selection of terrain in order to consider the widest range of issues related to the Model Standards. This delightful situation also allowed many of those present to climb or walk before or after the event and so keep in mind the reasons why we go to the mountains!

For Michelle & myself, we completed the Tour du Mont Blanc over ten days after the seminar in some of the hottest conditions seen recently in Europe, with average temperatures of 35 degrees daily.

Delegates then introduced themselves and outlined their objectives for the seminar.



The Gender Balance

A highlight of the seminar. Louise Thomas an instructor from Plas y Brenin presented a very enlightening session on the gender balance in mountaineering and in particular with regards training programs. The statistics were based on the UK, but it was felt by all present that they would be similar in all countries.

The number of women and men using the mountains for their recreation and play is very nearly equal in the UK, And yet the number of women who choose to use the mountains as a career and become leaders, instructors or guides is far less.

Approximately:

- 4% of Guides are Women
- 7% of Winter Mountain Instructors are women
- 9% of Summer Mountain Instructors are Women
- 20% of Summer Mountain Walking Leaders are women

The question must be asked as to why this is so, and does it matter?

Women tend to work within their capabilities and take less chances, especially with other safety at stake, they also tend to work more towards the needs of the group as opposed to their own personal goals, and women tend to be good listeners

Therefore we could be missing a lot of talented instructors in our own training schemes and women could be missing a great life style. There are some people who think that a life working in the outdoors is not very attractive to women, who traditionally are seen in a homemaker's role, and long periods away from home are frowned upon.

Additionally, until recent years and a growing expendable wealth the career opportunities and ability to make a good living has been limited. The industry in general has the following negative points against women:

- ☹ There are unsociable hours
- ☹ Most employable at weekends and holidays
- ☹ It is difficult with families
- ☹ It is physically demanding
- ☹ Historically it has been less acceptable for women to be away for extended periods



But for the women who do choose the mountains it is an exciting and stimulating way to live with many opportunities for women. So what can we do?

In 1994 a survey was carried out in the UK to determine the trends and interest amongst women. It was found that there was a huge interest amongst women to be instructors but stereotypes and social conditioning was putting them off. Perhaps we cannot help change the situation, or could we?

Women see it as a male dominated world in which they are not made welcome:

- ☹ Language, or the use of bad language tends to put women off.
- ☹ Use of "He" instead of 'She' is common in most training materials.
- ☹ Men assume women are the weakest in the group
- ☹ Men need to open their eyes to the strengths of women in the Outdoors.
- ☹ Trainers usually use the women in a group as the victims! This gives the impression that women are always the ones having accidents, and or are incapable of taking part in rescues.
- ☹ Few women are welcomed into formal rescue teams, or are relegated to support roles like providing food.

So what action should we be taking to try to correct this?

- ☺ Train the Trainers to be aware of the above generalities and try to avoid them.
- ☺ Advice must be aimed at women and raise awareness of the roles that can play in the industry.

On observed training courses both in the UK and here in South Africa, it was found that:

- ☹ Women are less confident in their own abilities, primarily due to the stereotyping situation
- ☹ Less likely to assume their competence
- ☹ They worry about not being fit enough

The result of this is that:

- ☺ They prepare well for assessments and tasks as they feel they must be certain of their abilities before subjecting themselves to scrutiny. There is a built in fear of letting the side down.
- ☺ And generally do well as they prepare better than men do.

The problem is if they have no idea of the level required of them they will never assume they are good enough! Men tend to over emphasise the harshness of the activities, and through their mannerisms tend to put women off.

In the UK, a series of information/training days were held specifically for women only. These were intended to inform women of the levels required and to encourage women to take an active role in leadership and training.

Women have a fear that they will be the only female on a course. This is intimidating to them in most cases, and it was very helpful for women to know they will be with other women, especially during initial training. Networks amongst women leaders / trainers have also helped to improve the confidence amongst women, as have the presence of women instructors on courses. Women tend to respond well to good female role models, so it is up to us to encourage women who have the aptitude to become instructors / leaders.

What is vitally important is that in the outdoors, we are not looking for super heroes, but simply good competent role models. The press is partially to blame for pushing the image of mountaineers being super heroes. These make up only a very small portion of the community. The majority of us are normal people who happen to enjoy the mountains.

Training and qualifications must assess competence, and must not be seen as a competition. The assessment must stress the positive aspects of each persons abilities, and all candidates must be assessed to the same criteria. Assessments must not be designed with the super hero in mind, but the average, good role model. It is important that standards are not dropped for women.

A need has been identified for qualifications that suit the actual activities, and in the UK a Walking Group Leader level was established. This new level has a 50% female leader count.

Organisations like the MCSA and MDT, must also work towards removing the other barriers to women, be they time constraints, *run modular courses that suit home makers*, cost, *are the courses affordable*, venue, *is it easy to access the course?*

Women can and do play a vital role in the outdoors community, but more needs to be done to get rid of the stereotyping and encourage women into leadership roles. If we don't do this, we will remain a predominantly men only industry.

The Tyrol Declaration & Voluntary Leaders

Why is the Tyrol Declaration of special interest to voluntary leaders? This was the question asked.

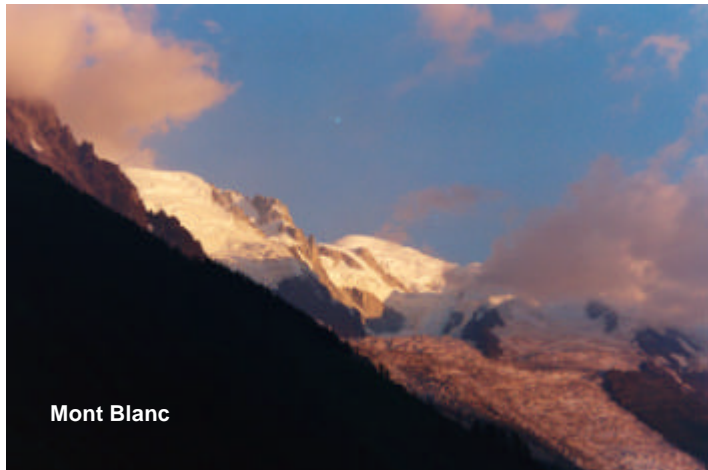
Voluntary Leaders:

- Train others
- Act all over the world
- They are an example to other mountaineers, especially beginners
- They can inspire, stimulate, and orientate others to behave, to act in the spirit of the declaration.

Article 5 of the Declaration speaks about the responsibilities of mountain leaders and instructors.

Professional mountain guides, other leaders and group members should each understand their respective roles and respect the freedoms and rights of other groups and individuals. In order to be prepared guides, leaders and group members should understand the demands, hazards and risks of the objective, have the necessary skills, experience and correct equipment, and check the weather and conditions.

1. The guide or leader informs the client or group about the risk inherent in a climb and the current danger level and if they are suitably experienced, involves them in the decision making process.
2. The selected route should relate to the skill and experience of the client or group in order to ensure it is an enjoyable and developmental experience.



Mont Blanc

3. If necessary the guide or leader points out the limits of his or her own ability and where appropriate refers clients or groups to more capable colleagues. It is the responsibility of clients and group members to point out if they believe a risk or hazard is too great and that retreat or alternative options should be followed.
4. In circumstances such as extreme climbs and high altitude ascents guides and leaders should carefully brief their clients and groups to ensure everyone is fully aware of the limits of support that guides and leaders can provide.
5. Local guides inform visiting colleagues about the distinctive features of their area and the current conditions.

Other articles of the Tyrol Declaration are also very important for voluntary leaders and instructors.

Article 1 is about individual responsibility

Mountaineers and climbers practice their sport in situations where there is risk of accidents and outside help may not be available. With this in mind, they pursue this activity at their own responsibility and are accountable for their own safety. The individual's actions should not endanger those around them nor the environment.

1. As leaders or instructors of any training of others we must stress the idea of this article.

Article 2 is about team spirit.

Members of the team should be prepared to make compromises in order to balance the interests and abilities of the group.

1. Leaders and instructors should inspire and lead others to meet the needs of the whole group and not only see the goal as the ultimate objective.

Article 3 is about the climbing & mountaineering community.

We owe every person we meet in the mountains or on the rocks an equal measure of respect. Even in isolated conditions and stressful situations, we should not forget to treat others as we would want to be treated ourselves.

1. As leaders & instructors we have to give the same respect to all members of our group as well as to all other people that we meet in the mountains
2. We have to inspire members of our group to do the same
3. By training others we can introduce this idea at an early stage.

Article 4 is about visiting foreign countries

As guests of foreign countries, we should always conduct ourselves politely and with restraint towards the people there – our hosts. We will respect holy mountains and other sacred places while seeking to benefit and assist local economy and people. Understanding of foreign cultures is part of a complete climbing experience.

1. When we visit other countries, we encourage our group to respect the spirit of this article.
2. Good preparation for a visit to foreign countries is very important.

Article 6 is about emergencies, dying and death.

To be prepared for emergencies and situations involving serious accidents and death all participants in mountain sports should clearly understand the risks and hazards and the need to have appropriate skills, knowledge and equipment. All participants need to be ready to help others in an event of an emergency or accident and also be ready to face to consequences of tragedy.

1. Leaders and instructors must when it is needed act in the spirit of article 6. As leader of the group they are responsible that the group acts in the same way.
2. It must be stressed, that we must act in the spirit of the article when the victim is or is not a member of our group.

Article 7 is about access and conservation

We believe that freedom of access to mountains and cliffs in a responsible manner is a fundamental right. We should always practice our activities in an environmentally sensitive way and are proactive in preserving nature. We respect access restrictions and regulations agreed by climbers with nature conservation organisations and authorities.

1. As leaders and instructors we must be aware about our responsibility to the environment. We respect measures to preserve the environment and respect access restrictions. We plan our activities with this in mind.

Article 8, 9 & 10 are about style, first ascents, sponsorship, advertising and public relations.

The quality of the experience and how we solve a problem is more important than whether we solve it. We strive to leave no trace.

The first ascent of a route or a mountain is a creative act. It should be done in at least as good a style as the traditions of the region and show responsibility toward the local climbing community and the needs of future climbers.

The co-operation between sponsors and athletes must be a professional relationship that serves the best interests of mountain sports. It is the responsibility of the mountain sports community in all its aspects to educate and inform both media and public in a proactive manner.

1. These articles are less about Leaders than individuals, but leaders should respect them in their own right.
2. We can, and should stress these ideas in all training we give.
3. We can, and should inspire others to leave nothing but footprints in the natural environment of the mountains.



Legal Expert Working Group

The threats to the sport that we perceive arise principally out of criminal law and the application of strict liability to occupiers and local authorities. There have been significant limits to the work, which needs to be continued both to expand research into areas that have not been covered and to keep the information we have up to date. The basic recommendations from the legal working group were:

1. Member associations may find it advantageous to lobby governments to reduce liability of landowners and occupiers in countries where this is a disincentive to access.
2. Member associations may find it advantageous to formulate a strategy for defending claims and prosecutions.
3. Member associations may find it advantageous to campaign against the automatic or inappropriate application of the criminal law in the aftermath of accidents.
4. In any litigation, both civil and criminal, lawyers and experts who understand both litigation and mountaineering are essential. Member associations may find it advantageous to compile registers of such lawyers and expert witnesses in their own country.
5. There are advantages in the UIAA keeping its understanding of legal issues up to date and improving the exchange of information between a network of legal experts in member associations.

Some other key points of interest included:

- Volunteer leaders have the same legal responsibility as professional guides.
- A leader must be able to show that they were using the latest recognised equipment and techniques or they could be held accountable in law.
- A person leading a group must be able to show that they have attended whatever training is available in their country if they wish to be leading parties in mountainous terrain. This includes

volunteer leaders and members of clubs who lead groups on club outings. Failure to have attended training is a valid argument for a negligence claim.

- Assistants to group leaders must also have been trained and qualified to lead groups.
- Trips must be adapted to the client's ability, and not the leaders whims.
- When working with children, even non-activity time is the leaders responsibility.
- Bad weather is the leaders responsibility. So if the weather turns bad then you must change the trip to accommodate it. Saying the weather was responsible for the accident is no protection from the law.
- If the group consists of just a group of friends, then there is no responsible person unless one is obviously seen as the expert in the group. For example a guide (this includes MDT trained people) going out with a group of friends. The guide is assumed to be the responsible person.
- When a client is involved, the guide is always responsible for all actions.
- There is always an obligation to assist others in trouble, but if you are leading an inexperienced group, your group's safety is paramount.
- A leader has a legal obligation to remain in direct control of all members of the party, so splitting the party is an obvious violation of this obligation.

Navigation & Group Leadership

After a day in the lecture room, this was an opportunity to stretch the legs.

The session was conducted on the Mgne des Posettes with the group walking up to the Aiguillette des Posettes.

Various navigation and group Leadership principles were put into practice, but nothing new that is not already taught in the MDT training scheme was forthcoming. It seems that in this regards, SA is already well in compliance with world standards, if not exceeding them.

The walk was very useful to have one on one discussions with other participants.



Teaching Adventure Climbing

The teaching of adventure climbing started off with an informal discussion at the chalet during which various ideas were discussed. Most of these related to acceptable methods.

One very emotional issue was the solo climbing of instructors while teaching novices to lead on Traditional gear. The large majority of those present felt that there were more disadvantages and dangers in solo climbing then there were advantages. Also in light of the legal implications it was felt that this could also be seen as negligence.

Louise Thomas and Martin Doyle instructors from Plas y Brenin were the only ones who approved of this practice, of those present at this session.

The group moved out to the Aiguillette d' Argentiere to put some of the discussion into practice for the rest of the afternoon.

The points that came out of this session were:

- ❑ Make sure you have a lesson plan
 - ❑ Use a simple approach
1. Climbing involves skills, techniques and knowledge. Instructors must make a list of what they want to achieve in the trainee and then arrange in a logical progression order.
 2. Types of climbers must be categorised and training organised in an appropriate order. It is no good trying to train someone in big walls before they can lead.

Example:

1. Choose a Type of climber
2. List what you can assume the climber already knows.

3. Check and confirm that the climber does know the assumed knowledge & skills.
 4. List skills, techniques and knowledge that they may not be familiar with.
 - ❑ Movement, Process / System, Equipment, Techniques, principles, Judgement, Awareness of hazards and understanding risks through progressive exposure.
 5. Put these into a logical progressive order.
 6. Choose an appropriate venue with the teaching outcomes in mind.
- ❑ The skills and techniques taught when teaching a student how to climb should be common practice. Don't teach too much too fast and each skill must have an easily understood reason.
 - ❑ The environment is your resource. Use it appropriately
 - ❑ Teach all the skills in context. Climbing is real, you don't need to make up activities, just use what climbers use every day. This is what the student will learn best.

We all teach and learn in a different way. Climbing involves a series of simple skills that involve some motor-neuron co ordination. That means that it is a practical thing to learn, no matter what your preferred learning style is. You still have to do it practically.

So when teaching students:

1. Introduce the skill
2. Demonstrate clearly the part of the skill
3. Explain why you are doing it
4. Allow the student to practice
5. Repeat using different varieties and situations.

Initially you will teach closed skills like tying knots. It is either right or wrong so you need to be fairly directive. "Do it like this"

Constructing anchors involves open skills and is therefore more about understanding principles applied in different situations. There can be some flexibility here, so long as it is "Safe" & "Works".

Developments in Coaching Ice Climbing

For those that did not attend the Navigation session, an Ice climbing coaching session was held, including dry tooling.

Decision to Carry Forward to the UIAA

- ❑ The word "Voluntary" should be dropped from all training programs as this gives the impression that volunteer trainers need different skills to professional ones.

Conclusion

Networking with other countries and sharing the frustrations and joys of the industry was possibly the greatest benefit of this meeting.

There is a limit to how much one can actually gain in 3 days, but the bonds forged that continue after the event are immeasurable.

I would highly recommend that South Africa continue to attend this very worthwhile event, which is planned for every three years.

Andrew Friedemann