



MDT Administrator

P.O.Box 662, Gillitts 3603

✉ [admin@mdt.za.org](mailto:admin@mdt.za.org)

🌐 [www.mdt.za.org](http://www.mdt.za.org)

# Candidate Handbook

## Guidance Notes, Code of Practice & Policy Statements

*For the Delivery of industry-recognised MDT Training & Assessment*

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# MDT Candidates' Handbook

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of this Document

This document is intended as a guide for people seeking high-quality, industry-approved, mountain-related leader training, possibly towards certification, be it for recreational, or for commercial purposes. It contains a basic introduction to the South African Mountaineering Development and Training Trust (MDT) and provides information about the MDT's national Mountain (Leader) Training Programme as well as outlining its Policies.

### 1.2 Brief background on the MDT

The MDT was established in 1994, following a mandate that came out of a national workshop held that year at Kirstenbosch, Cape Town. The purpose of the workshop was to address the need to establish and maintain high and consistent standards for mountain leader training nationally. At the workshop there was broad representation from the main mountain clubs of South Africa at the time, as well as from other stakeholder organisations.

The purpose, or function of the MDT is to develop a national Mountain Leader Training Programme in South Africa, based on international standards and precedent, then to facilitate and administer the implementation of this programme and to monitor standards (of training and assessment) on an ongoing basis.

The MDT is in the process of getting approval from the World Mountaineering Federation (UIAA) for the higher levels of MDT Awards. This will serve to benchmark the MDT's Training Programme against the internationally accepted standards for mountain leadership at those levels.

### 1.3 Organisational structure of the MDT

The MDT comprises a Board of Trustees, an Administrator, a National (management) Committee (Natcom), and accredited Service Providers (SPs), who are MDT-approved persons holding MDT Instructor/ trainer certification. It is the SPs who provide the training and assessment of the various levels of Awards within the MDT Programme, in accordance with the standards, the procedures and the code of conduct defined by the MDT. The SPs are contractually bound to the MDT and should be Candidates' primary interface with the MDT for their training and/ or assessment needs and the related process.

### 1.4 Terminology

- **Trainer** – Qualified MDT Instructor/ Trainer who has met the requirements of the MDT Service Provider Policy.
- **Assessor** – Qualified MDT Instructor/ Trainer who has met the requirements of the MDT Service Provider Policy and the MDT Assessor Policy.
- **Service Provider (SP)** – An MDT-accredited Trainer and/ or Assessor as described above, contracted to the MDT. Service Providers (SPs) are the ones to contact to facilitate MDT training and/ or assessment.
- **Moderator** – MDT-approved persons who have met the requirements of the MDT Service Provider Policy and holds the national Moderator qualification. This is a quality assurance function to help ensure high standards of assessment by assessors through reviewing the process followed, evidence collected and judgement arrived at.
- **We** – The term 'we' indicates the MDT organisation, including its Service Providers (SPs).
- **Candidate** – A person who has registered with the MDT for a training and/ or assessment course with a SP. The term Candidate refers, potentially, to YOU.
- **Award** – The training and assessment package for a specific level of MDT certification. There are 9 in all.
- **Programme** – The full range of Awards collectively make up the MDT Mountain (Leader) Training Programme.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** – Recognition of Prior Learning is a means of assessing the currency and relevance of a Candidate's competency, based on the evaluation of a Portfolio of Evidence supplied by the Candidate to a SP. This process is followed by Prospective Candidates applying to skip out the training phase of an Award and is only for people who have a lot of relevant experience, including from the recent past (i.e. the experience must also be current)

- **Portfolio of Evidence (PoE)** - Body of Evidence showing Candidates' current and relevant competence. This must include Candidates' mountain logbooks and may include: certified copies of relevant qualifications/ certification, testimonials/ letters of reference, product sample, and video footage.

## 1.5 Marketing

The MDT does, to a degree, market its Mountain Training Programme. To this extent, it has a website and has had some generic flyers printed that are available, on request, to the SPs and other interested persons/ organisations/ businesses. Further to this, it is the SPs who market the MDT training and assessment services and/or courses that they offer.

Every effort is made to ensure that MDT products match the expected outcomes from our marketing strategies. Special attention is given to ensure that MDT advertising material accurately reflects the content and intended outcomes of our current Training Programme.

# 2. Educational Standards

## 2.1 MDT Training Programme Standards

The MDT's Mountain Leader Training Programme is based on international standards (UK, New Zealand, Canada, etc.), with some modifications and additions to suit local conditions. Standards are high, as are the responsibilities of all mountain leaders. The training programme has been geared to the needs of mountaineering in South Africa, including the emerging commercial sector. The MDT has become, as per its original mandate, the (mountain) industry-recognised organisation through which to get certified, be it for recreational purposes, or to work in this growing industry. Further, individuals and mountain-related clubs, as well as State departments and parastatal bodies have recognised the MDT to be the organisation through which to get mountain skills and leader training. The MDT Training Programme exceeds the outcomes required by the South African Qualifications Authority mountain guiding unit standards, but the MDT does not offer National Qualification certification. This is offered by certain of the SP's as an addition to the MDT programme. The MDT has followed this route to ensure it can remain independent of the National Qualifications system and act as an effective and independent watchdog of standards.

## 2.2 Service Provider Standards

Instructors/ trainers (SPs) accredited by the MDT have a lot (normally a minimum of 10 years) of mountain experience and a high level of competency, both as mountain leaders and as trainers. They have been through (at least) one of the MDT Instructor Schemes and attend a national MDT Instructor workshop at least once every two years. At these they share and practice skills and experience, or new ideas, to help ensure uniformity of standards nationally and to maintain currency of instructor/ trainer competence. Trainers present MDT courses that fall within their 'scope of practice' as noted in their MDT certification and they follow an MDT-prescribed standard of practice. SPs always try to provide the best possible service to and learning environment for their Candidates.

## 2.3 Training and Assessment

SPs use competency-based training techniques. Training and assessment is concerned with the learning and demonstration of specified knowledge and skills, and their application, to meet each of the course learning outcomes. Candidates' performance is measured against a pre-determined learning outcome rather than achievement relative to that of other Candidates. With this training approach, the more simple knowledge and skills are generally covered early on, with the more complex ones coming later. There is confirmation of learning each step of the way. Confirmation of learning includes: theoretical tests, skill assessments and practical assignments where knowledge and skills will be applied. Service Providers will carefully consider individual needs at each step of the training process with the aim of maximising safety, enjoyment and skills/ knowledge transfer.

## 2.4 Quality Assurance

The MDT has a system of internal Quality Assurance in place to help monitor standards. This could serve to further safeguard Candidates welfare and interests. The MDT Administrator, with the Candidates participation, monitors the SP's performance and conduct, using a course evaluation questionnaire sent to each Candidate after an MDT course. In this questionnaire Candidates are invited to comment on how well the components and delivery of the course matched their expectations, especially with regard to course content and the SP's consideration for their specific needs. See Quality Assurance section (A1) in the Appendices for more information.

## **3. Registration**

### **3.1 Pre-Registration**

People considering registration with the MDT for training and/ or assessment should, at an early stage, have a discussion with a SP about their needs and the MDT's Mountain Training Programme, to establish what the most suitable level of training and/ or assessment is for each potential Candidate. So, if you have NOT received this Handbook from an MDT SP and, therefore, have not yet made contact with a SP, we recommend that you do this as soon as possible. This should be done, preferably in person (face to face), or at least by telephone, before going any further than reading briefly through this document.

The purpose of this initial discussion is for SPs to hear from Candidates what their experience, needs and expectations are and then to orientate Candidates as to the MDT's standards, policies, procedures and other important information. SPs will also ensure, at this interview/ discussion, that Candidates have all the relevant information on the MDT's Training Programme and the most appropriate MDT Award level(s) for each individual, including content and vocational outcomes, fees and other costs. SPs should discuss flexible learning and assessment procedures, and options for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

By the time Candidates register they should be fully aware of the MDT Training Programme, Policies and Practice and should have read through the Prospectuses and Syllabi of the Awards for which they are registering.

### **3.2 Required Experience**

MDT Training and Assessment courses generally require that Candidates have certain levels of experience before starting the training, and/ or the assessment. Candidates are usually required, therefore, to provide the SP with evidence of their relevant experience, to show they have met the specified requirements for the Award they plan to register for. This is done in the form of a logbook and/ or with references/ testimonials from past employer(s) and/ or well-known/ reputable mountain leaders.

This logbook requirement is less important with entry-level MDT Awards, but a mandatory requirement for the other Awards, especially in situations where applicant Candidate(s) have never had formal training provided by a qualified trainer. The experience requirements for MDT course attendance are detailed in the Prospectus for each Award, available from MDT SPs, or off the MDT website. MDT logbooks are provided to Candidates by the SPs, normally when registering with the MDT, or from the MDT website. A different logbook is issued for each Award level registered for.

### **3.3. Registration Process**

In order to attend any of the official MDT training courses, it is necessary for (potential) Candidates to register with the MDT. This involves Candidates completing an official MDT Registration form and paying a registration fee of R150. This is done through any of the MDT SPs who, on behalf of Candidates, send to the MDT Administrator documentation and information. This registration generally happens just before Candidates start an MDT training course. Please note: Direct applications to the MDT will not be accepted, as the MDT does not enter into contract with Candidates.

Upon receipt of Registration Forms from SPs, the MDT Administrator sends an acknowledgement of registration and registration numbers to the individuals involved. The registration numbers help with tracking the administrative process.

Registration with the MDT is required for each level of training and assessment done by a Candidate. So, registration is for an MDT Award and, when moving to another MDT Award, re-registration is required. Candidates retain their MDT registration numbers when registering for different MDT Awards.

For information about registration for Assessment, see the Certification Section (# 5) below.

### **3.4 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Current Competence**

We recognise that some Candidates may already have some of the required knowledge, skills and ability to apply these. If you are in this position, you are entitled to apply to the MDT for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), with evidence being submitted to support your claim. Remember, if going this route, the evidence must indicate sufficient current competence for it to be most useful in supporting your application. If successful, Candidates may be granted partial, or full, exemption from the training portions of an Award. However, the same Candidates still need to undertake the full assessment to verify their competency. There is no exemption from assessment.

## **3.5 Steps for RPL**

### **3.5.1 Initial Application and Registration**

Candidates applying for RPL must register as such with the MDT. To do this, the Registration form must be completed and given to a SP with a RPL registration fee (R300). Such Candidates also need to submit to SPs their Portfolios of Evidence (PoE) that must include up-to-date mountain logbooks containing the relevant experience.

### **3.5.2 Portfolio of Evidence Assessment**

If the SP judges that sufficient evidence of current and relevant experience and competence has been presented in a Candidate's PoE, the SP will inform the Candidate that he/ she does not have to do the training module for the Award and can, therefore, go straight into an assessment course. However, if the SP decides that insufficient evidence has been presented in a Candidate's PoE, the SP will inform the Candidate that he/ she must first attend the training course, or part thereof, before being accepted into the assessment.

### **3.5.3 Assessment**

All RPL Candidates require a full assessment performed by an assessor, as with all other Candidates wanting certification. Occasionally Candidates following the RPL route fail their assessment, but this is usually the result of poor preparation for the assessment by the Candidates. For further information see Certification Section (# 5)

## **4. Courses**

### **4.1 Information about Courses**

#### **4.1.1 Accessing Course Information**

A certain amount of Course information is to be found in the Prospectuses and Syllabi for the various Awards. These can be obtained from SPs, the MDT Administrator, or the MDT website. However, some details concerning the courses need to be obtained from the selected SPs. These include: the scheduling (dates), the specific course programme, the location and venues to be used, the cost and what is included in that cost, payment arrangements, transport arrangements, equipment requirements etc.

#### **4.1.2 Duration and scheduling**

The duration of courses is typically more than a day, up to 6 practical days, with additional time for lectures and/ or tasks for the Candidates to complete as part of the training/ assessment. Courses are either presented in a compact, 'block' period of time, or over weekends, spread out over a longer period to accommodate those people who can't free up from weekday work. The practical exercises are normally run over full days and held in the mountains. The theoretical lectures are normally about 2 hours long and often take place in the early evenings.

#### **4.1.3 Logistics for Courses**

Candidates must be prepared to do some travelling and to participate in an outdoor mountainous setting whilst participating in courses. Further, please note that food, personal equipment and transportation are usually NOT included in the course costs, unless otherwise stated by SPs, or in the course information package given to Candidates by them. Candidates should speak to SPs about this, in advance of starting training and/ or assessment to clarify what they must provide for themselves. Should Candidates require any specific equipment and/ or information that has not been made available, or some additional information for study or reading, they may request this through SPs.

### **4.2 Equipment:**

Equipment can mean the difference between life and death on the mountain. Appropriate and reliable equipment can make the hardships and hazards of the mountains and associated weather more manageable and, therefore, make activities in the mountains safer and more enjoyable. Group leadership in the mountains is made significantly easier if the party concerned has the proper equipment, both group and personal, for the activity and the setting (location, terrain, season and weather, etc).

Candidates should, therefore, be in the ongoing process of upgrading their equipment. Old and/ or inferior quality garments, footwear and equipment can fail to function without warning and this could be at a time in the mountains when it is very difficult to deal with the resulting situation and people's lives could be put at high risk.

As mentioned above, Candidates are normally expected to supply their own equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when attending MDT training and/ or assessment courses. Part of the reason for this is that Candidates become, whilst using it on MDT courses, more familiar with their equipment and gain increased confidence in it.

This equipment includes such items as; helmets, harnesses, karabiners, personal first aid kit, ropes, slings, belay/descending devices, backpacks, stoves, tents, sleeping bags, hiking boots, breathable waterproof shell garments, (head) torches, etc. If Candidates are experiencing difficulty in obtaining any equipment or are unsure of what to purchase in this regard, the SPs can be asked for advice, or can, possibly, arrange equipment loan/hire.

### **4.3 Bad Weather:**

Bad weather is not always reason for postponing, or cancelling an MDT training and/or assessment course. For some activities, light rain or patchy weather is considered, generally, to be acceptable conditions for courses to be allowed to continue. It should also be remembered that the most suitable conditions for training and/or assessing navigation include low-visibility. This normally means having to be up in the clouds and associated weather, or doing exercises on dark nights, ideally over New Moon periods!

However, set-in rain, very strong winds, extreme heat or other conditions deemed to be a safety risk by SPs, would necessitate the stopping, if already underway, and re-scheduling of courses. In other words, the SPs reserve the right to re-schedule a course, or portion thereof, at short notice due to adverse weather conditions. If this were to happen they would transfer Candidates' bookings with no additional fees being charged for this. It should be noted that, in some cases, it is possible, in bad weather, to continue training and/or assessing at an indoor venue, if a suitable one is available.

If Candidates are unsure, before the start up of a course, of the weather and have not heard from their SP they should call their SP for a confirmation of the plan of action.

### **4.4 Risk Management and Indemnity:**

Please be aware that there are inherent risks involved in outdoor activities and that, by participating in an MDT training or assessment course, Candidates are exposing themselves to these risks. SPs are well aware of this and exercise due care and diligence at all times. But, despite this, the risks still exist and can range from the possibility of sustaining an injury, to losing personal property (through theft, or absent-mindedness), to a Candidate not enjoying a course.

Candidates must realise that they may get injured in a wide range of situations, including: getting blisters from shoes or contact with plants, tripping, falling, being hit by a falling object, being stung or bitten, exposure to heat, exposure to cold, wet and windy conditions, dehydration, exhaustion, burns from sun, lightning, rope or flame. Some of these could have serious consequences, including resulting in disability, or death. So, Candidates need to consider the implications of this factor before signing on for an MDT training and/or assessment course.

As referred to above, SPs will do everything in their power to reduce, or eliminate, the possibility of any of these things happening through professional conduct, risk assessment and management, high safety standards and through having the ability to deal with emergency situations. This does not, however, make them infallible.

As is the case in the outdoor adventure industry generally, all Candidates are required to sign a disclaimer/waiver & release/ indemnity form when making course bookings with SPs, or just before the start of MDT courses. This form then becomes the Candidate's agreement with the SP to accept that, in the unlikely event of an incident or accident involving the Candidate, he/ she will take full responsibility for it and the consequences. Candidates should read through the waiver release form with the SPs, who should explain the risks associated with participating in the specific activity and make sure they understand the content of the form fully before signing it. A sample disclaimer is to be found at the end of the Appendices (B1) of this document.

Having said all of that, it must be said that statistically the most dangerous part of your involvement with MDT training and/or assessment courses is the drive there and back! However, if the risk feels too big, then the mountains are possibly not a suitable recreational play ground, or work environment, for you and you should re-evaluate your intended participation in MDT training/ assessment courses.

### **4.5 Candidates' Responsibility to MDT:**

In order for Candidates to qualify as mountain leaders, at whatever level, they need to demonstrate competence in all the aspects of the relevant Syllabus. This usually involves the development of skills - practical, theoretical and interpersonal. Candidates are required to work as part of a team and as team leader. Consequently, MDT courses can be challenging in every respect, making Candidates face issues, both inward and outward, which need to be overcome in order to progress. Candidates' success, therefore, depends not only on their abilities but, as importantly, on their individual effort, stamina and attitude. SPs take every reasonable step to assist Candidates, but (prospective) Candidates must realise that they need to work, study and apply themselves to this task of getting a mountain (leader) qualification. This programme is about YOU, the Candidate.

Concerning Candidates' behaviour on courses, it must be remembered that our conduct affects those around us. Said differently, the quality of the experience for the trainers and the other Candidates during courses is affected, positively or negatively, by the conduct of the people involved. Therefore, SPs require Candidates, whilst participating in training and/ or assessment courses, to present themselves in a responsible manner, both in dress and behaviour. This includes the sessions where different trainers and/ or leaders are in charge.

In other words, Candidates need to conduct themselves in a manner that enhances the safety, enjoyment and well-being of all those involved in the course. If a Candidate's behaviour is disruptive to other candidates or clients, or places others in danger, he/ she may be asked to leave the course, without the option of a refund. For more information on this, refer to the Candidates' Disciplinary Policy (# A8) in the Appendices.

## **5. Certification**

### **5.1 'Registration' for Assessment**

SPs schedule the assessment and inform Candidates of the cost of this and all relevant details about the assessment, such as place, time, process etc. Candidates need to pay the MDT (through SPs) the assessment fee of R150 for processing their assessments. This is in addition to the registration fee and whatever fees for the actual assessments are set by the SPs.

Candidates need to apply to be accepted onto an MDT assessment course. For application Candidates must submit their up-to-date MDT logbooks and, ideally, other relevant evidence to SPs. They need to show that they have met the specified minimum requirements for the consolidation period. SPs accept Candidates if they have met the requirements and show evidence of being ready for assessment. If not, then SPs advise applicants what they need to do to better prepare for the assessments, before they would be accepted onto the relevant assessment courses. This is partly an effort by SPs to uphold the prescribed high standards, but also to prevent Candidates wasting their time and money if they are not yet fully competent.

An assessment fee of R150 must be paid before attending an MDT assessment. Candidates who have not registered for the training part of the Award are required to pay the MDT registration fee of R150 as well.

### **5.2 Assessment**

Due to the high practical content of MDT Awards, much of the assessment for these is practical. Questioning, normally both written and verbal, to assess knowledge also forms part of the assessment course. Further, simulation may be used to assess Candidates' ability to apply their knowledge and skills to a variety of different contexts.

Practical assessment is not just a 'tick' exercise. It is a relaxed and friendly learning experience in itself. We find that most Candidates have some difficulty in performing tasks to the required standard, or are lacking in some aspects of knowledge. Our SPs are more than willing to discuss concepts and methods with you before the assessment, to help you perform all the required tasks satisfactorily.

The duration of assessment courses varies, depending on the level of Award, and this information is given in the Prospectus for each Award level. Assessment results can be: Pass, Deferred, or Fail. The procedure for Candidates to follow, in the event of not passing, is also outlined in the course Prospectuses. These are available from SPs, from the MDT website, or directly through the MDT Administrator.

All assessments require the full participation and preparation of Candidates. Candidates are expected to prepare themselves for assessment as well as can be reasonably expected, having read and studied all supplied course material and having practiced the practical skills until he/she feel confident. SPs take every reasonable step to ensure that Candidates are ready for assessment. If you are experiencing difficulties, you may approach the SP for counselling and advice.

Assessments involve practical demonstrations and theoretical exercises. Most assessments require the completion of questionnaires and assignments before, or after, the practical assessment has been completed. Candidates are expected to have completed all set tasks on time and to the best of their ability. These tasks are required for ongoing assessment of Candidate's understanding of the material. Late submission of assignments will be accepted only at the discretion of the assessor, after consideration of the circumstances. Failure to complete tasks would definitely reduce the chances of success. Assessment fees are not refundable, so it is worth getting it right first time around. However, the knowledge gained in the case of an unsuccessful assessment usually outweighs the cost.

Assessors compile reports, including judgements, for each Candidate following assessments and SPs send these together with supporting information to the MDT Administrator for processing. Certificates for successful



Candidates are sent to SPs, who then arrange for Candidates to receive them. The turnaround time for issuing of certificates is no more than 4 weeks from successful completion of assessment.

### **5.3 Certificates**

On completion of assessment, Candidates' completed documentation will be submitted to the MDT for moderation and the issue of certificates, when applicable. Certification is dependant on Candidates having demonstrated to an assessor competency in all aspects of the qualification.

Please be aware that although assessors give Candidates results after assessments are completed, an MDT moderator may change the results as part of the assessment moderation process, if deemed to be necessary. In such cases Candidates would be informed of all the factors that have led to the change in result.

The MDT undertakes to complete all administrative functions within seven (7) days of finalisation of all components of any assessment. Successful Candidates should receive Certificates within twenty one (21) days after the completion of their assessments. Should Candidates experience a delay in receiving certification they are asked to please contact the MDT Administrator, who will follow up and report back to them.

### **5.4 Validity Period**

The validity period of MDT certificates is three (3) years. To extend, or renew, this period, Candidates need to apply for verification of their competence at the appropriate levels. This is to help ensure that certificate holders remain appropriately active and, therefore, maintain their knowledge, skills and ability to apply these.

Before the expiry of this period, Candidates holding certificates need to submit their updated logbooks (and other supporting information/ proof) to any SP. SPs then check the logbooks (and other evidence submitted) to evaluate the content and currency of Candidates' experience, relative to the Award they hold. If the SP feels satisfied that a Candidate has continued being sufficiently active in the mountains and at an appropriate level, the SP would arrange for the re-validation of that certificate for a further three (3) year period.

However, if the SP is NOT convinced that a Candidate has remained active, or feels that he/ she has not been active at the appropriate level and/ or with the required type of activities, then the SP would advise such Candidate that (part, or full) re-assessment would be necessary before the MDT certificate could be renewed.

In such situations, the re-assessment would be planned and carried out between the SP and the Candidate and, once successfully completed, the Candidate's certificate could be re-validated. The SP would arrange for this to be processed by the MDT Administrator. The standard R150 assessment fee applies to cover the cost of the administration and re issue of a certificate.

## **6. Candidates**

### **6.1 Candidates**

Candidates need to be passionate about the mountains and what they do in these, as well as have the desire to lead and take responsibility for the safety and well being of others in mountainous terrain, if they are to get the most out of the MDT Training Programme and be good mountain leaders.

To be a good mountain leader it takes a high level of the relevant knowledge, skills and practice, together with commitment, strength of character and good social skills. These characteristics include: discipline and reliability, decision-making and delegation skills, patience and perseverance, perception and attention to detail, empathy and compassion, stamina and resilience, humility and grace, sense of humour, self-critical.

Candidates are expected to apply themselves and co-operate with the course trainer/assessor. During courses important safety information is given which must be complied with for the safety of all course participants and future group members. The course is performance-based which means that Candidates must demonstrate that they are capable of performing the required skills to the level expected.

### **6.2 Access and Equity**

Candidates have the right to learn in an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment and be treated in a fair and considerate manner, regardless of culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age. SPs are committed, in their association with the MDT, to integrating access and equity principles into their services and to providing information, advice and support that are consistent with these principles.

So, the MDT does not intend to place obstacles in the path of prospective Candidates who have special needs and aspirations to learn. However, there are certain realities that go with undertaking physical activities in remote mountainous environment that people with disabilities may find difficult, or impossible, to deal with. The performance requirements for an MDT course are never waived, regardless of a person's physical and/ or mental ability. Therefore, there are some conditions that apply. For more information on these, please turn to "Access and Equity - Conditions" (A2) in the Appendices.

If the MDT or a SP is found to have violated basic human rights, or act in a way that is inconsistent with these conditions and the accepted code of practice, the person or organisation will be dealt with, through the MDT National Committee, in accordance with the legislation in force at the time of the non-compliance.

Note: There are age restrictions for people wanting to participate in MDT Courses. This varies depending on the level of the Award concerned. These age restrictions for MDT courses are specified in the Award Prospectuses.

### **6.3. Medical fitness:**

Participation in the activities associated with MDT training and/ or assessment requires a reasonable level of fitness. Candidates should not, therefore, have any medical condition that may interfere with their ability to undertake the planned activities. If there were to be any doubt about the medical fitness of a Candidate, medical approval from his/ her doctor would be required by the SP before the individual is allowed to participate in the course.

The MDT SPs require from (potential) Candidates a doctor's letter of approval for course participation if they have any of the following medical conditions:

- Severe epilepsy
- History of back and/ or spinal injuries.
- History of kidney/ renal problems
- Severe asthma
- History of heart attacks and/or heart problems.
- Disease that would be classified by a medical practitioner as highly infectious (notifiable), posing a real health threat to others.
- Any other medical condition that could interfere with the ability of a person to participate safely in the planned activities.

**NOTE:** Allergies, especially any that could lead to severe allergic reactions, must be brought to the attention of SPs before the start of an MDT course. Candidates who are susceptible to allergic reactions should carry medication around with them as a precaution. This includes on any MDT course. If such Candidates do not have suitable medication they must inform SPs in advance, so that alternative arrangements can be made by SPs.

### **6.4 Physical Fitness:**

Most MDT training and assessment courses offered by SPs are in some way physically demanding. It is important, therefore, that Candidates disclose any physical condition or illness that may limit or endanger them, or their fellow Candidates whilst with them. Any information given to SPs will be kept in the strictest confidence. If the condition is of a highly personal nature, a word with the SP in private will do. If you do not tell your SP, it is presumed that you are in good health and are adequately fit for the planned activity.

It should be remembered that outdoor leaders are required to be "fit for task", achieving and maintaining a higher level of fitness than that required merely for participatory purposes.

If Candidates are in doubt as to their ability to complete training due to low fitness levels, they are asked to discuss this with the relevant SP when making bookings to attend training and/ or assessment courses. They should also get confirmation from the SP, as well as any other leader/ trainers who may be brought in by the SP to assist on the course, that they are aware of the condition.

### **6.5 Swimming ability**

For some MDT Awards river crossings and/ or river travel is part of the syllabus. This means Candidates would be required to enter the water and possibly either swim, or paddle, across according to the nature of the situation. Candidates who are non-swimmers must bring this to the attention of the SP before the start of any such activity. Further, any medical condition that may interfere with a Candidate's ability to swim, or participate in planned water activities, must be brought to the attention of the SP before the start of these activities.

## 6.6 Insurances

Neither the MDT nor its SPs will be held liable for any medical, or rescue, expenses arising from an incident and/ or accident that may occur during training and/ or assessment courses. Therefore, Candidates are strongly encouraged by the MDT to ensure they have suitable life and medical insurance cover, as well as emergency evacuation cover, before the start of courses, to cover these unlikely, but possible, eventualities. Candidates should make sure that these insurances are valid for and cover fully the mountain activities that they are to be participating in. Check the fine print of the Exclusions section!

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(See overleaf for MDT Policy Statements and Conditions)

# MDT POLICY STATEMENTS AND CONDITIONS

Candidates should make themselves aware of the policies of the MDT. These are the focus of this part of the Candidates' Handbook. Some have been summarised, while others are included in full. Where the full policy is shown below it is indicated by the words "Full Policy". Additional information and full policies can be obtained from your Service Provider (SP), the MDT Administration, or on the MDT Website.

## A1. Quality Assurance

The MDT strives to ensure that all Candidates receive adequate training. MDT Training should be realistic and accurate, equipping Candidates with skills and knowledge that they need for properly managing the demands of the mountain environment. This is relative to the type and level of training they are undertaking. MDT SPs have extensive experience in mountain safety and in the training of mountain-based activities. Ideally, the course is not properly completed until every Candidate has reached at least the required (minimum) standard of performance. We do not "cut corners" and we never compromise safety.

All Candidates who have just completed a course will be invited by the MDT to complete a short questionnaire to get feedback about their impression of the quality of the trainer and the course content. Feedback from the questionnaire is used to improve our Programme of Awards and associated services. The MDT Administrator treats all information supplied by Candidates in this questionnaire as confidential.

## A2. Access and Equity - Conditions

Due to the demands of mountain activities and potentially rough nature of the terrain, as well as the possibility of remote settings, the performance requirements for an MDT course are never waived, regardless of a person's physical and/ or mental ability. Therefore, the following conditions apply:

- **Paraplegics/Quadriplegics:** Adventure based activities and other work activities in exposed situations, or in remote locations require a person to have the full use of his/her limbs. Such mobility is, therefore, a crucial performance requirement in most MDT courses. An example as to why this is the case is, in the event of an accident in the mountains, a person who is not fully mobile may find it difficult, or impossible, to carry out an improvised rescue, or to go to call for help.
- **Amputees:** Provided the person is otherwise fit and healthy, he/ she can undertake Adventure activities.
- **HIV and AIDS:** The MDT and its SPs do not discriminate against people who have tested HIV positive, or who have AIDS. However, Candidates who have HIV and/ or AIDS must inform their SPs of this fact before the commencement of the MDT course they intend to participate in, as it is possible that blood or other body fluids could be transferred between participants in an accident. This brings the matter to the relevant trainer and/ or assessor's attention and serves as a safety precaution. The information is confidential and would be treated as such by SP and trainers/ assessors involved with the course.
- **Pregnancy:** The 1<sup>st</sup> trimester of pregnancy does not normally interfere with sporting activities (exception: scuba diving). However, we require that pregnant women, who are planning on attending an MDT training and/ or assessment course, first contact their doctors for advice and to obtain written approval for inclusion on the course. This doctor's letter should then be submitted with the registration form to the chosen SP. Pregnant women past the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester of pregnancy should think twice about participating in an MDT course at that stage and must definitely obtain medical approval from their doctors. It should be noted that, in climbing activities, the impact force of a fall could harm both the mother and her unborn child.
- **Socio-economic:** People from previously disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who cannot afford the cost of training as a once-off payment may request a progress-payment arrangement from their SP, where course fees can be paid off in a series of instalments. The instalment amount is negotiable with SPs. Either way, the same standard of learning opportunities and fairness prevail in the MDT's training Programme for all Candidates, regardless of their social status and/ or economic background.
- **Religion, race and creed:** Prospective Candidates, or Candidates already enrolled on a course, will not be denied access to a course, abused, or in any way singled out on account of their religious beliefs, creed, race, physical appearance, or political views. However it must be accepted by Candidates that some sections of courses may take place over days of religious significance, or recognised "days of rest". Acceptance of this, when necessary, is necessary to help the SPs meet the logistical requirements.
- **Mental capacity:** A person must have the mental capacity to understand and appreciate both the potential dangers and the technical skill requirements of working in the Adventure industry. MDT performance requirements are not waived, or modified, to suit the mental capacity of an individual. Candidates are required, after training and suitable consolidation, to effectively solve problems and apply recently acquired skills to meet performance objectives under assessment conditions and then on an ongoing basis.
- **Vision impairment:** All course vocational outcomes require a person to be able to make a detailed inspection of technical systems and the environment. Failure to carry out proper checking by observation and tactile test could result in catastrophic accidents. We feel that glasses and/ or contact lenses should be

used/ worn during training and assessment course, as well as on an ongoing basis whenever involved with mountain (leadership) activities, by Candidates whose vision requires this.

- **Language:** Typically training is presented in English. However interpreters can be arranged by SPs, or the Candidate(s) needing that extra service, with any costs relating to this being for the account of the Candidates needing this additional service.

Any infringement of the above Access and Equity conditions by the MDT, or a SP, will be dealt with through the MDT National Committee, in accordance with the legislation in force at the time of the non-compliance.

### **A3. Language, Literacy and Numeracy Policy** (Full policy)

MDT training and assessment often takes place in potentially dangerous and, or remote locations and settings, realistic in terms of the environment Candidates are to be practicing in after courses, on an ongoing basis. Therefore, Candidates' ability to quickly and correctly give spoken instructions, or to immediately understand and appropriately respond to them, is crucial to individual and group safety.

The following Language, Literacy and Numeracy requirements apply to MDT courses:

1. All courses are taught in the English language unless otherwise stipulated by the SP.
2. Candidates must be able to understand and speak the course language with its technical terminology.
3. Candidates are expected to understand questions that others may ask and to respond in a way that is reasonably clear and of sufficient content to properly address the question asked. The vocational outcomes require Candidates to be effective communicators.
4. Candidates must be able to quickly and accurately respond to instructions, some of which may be given in stressful and potentially dangerous situations.
5. The ability to read and write is not obligatory. However, Candidates are expected to complete a series of written exam papers using the course language. Those Candidates who cannot read may, therefore, request to have the questions read to them by the assessor, who may also, if asked to by Candidates who cannot write, fill in the exact answers given verbally by such Candidates.
6. Candidates are expected to be able to perform simple calculations using whole numbers. A calculator may be used where fractions, or decimals, are involved. Higher education Candidates are expected to be able to use simple equations to find solutions to mathematical problems, as such calculations are necessary for some MDT qualifications.

### **A4. Refund Policy** (Full Policy)

MDT fees for registration and/ or assessment are only refunded if Candidates have a very good reason for non-attendance of, or premature withdrawal from, a course. Neither MDT registration fees, nor of MDT assessment fees will be refunded when Candidates leave a course before it starts, or part way through, due to "lack of interest" or "change of mind". Candidate registrations are taken by the MDT to be confirmed, once processed by the MDT Administrator and will not be refunded.

### **A5. Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy** (Full Policy)

The MDT undertakes to comply with sexual harassment and anti-discrimination laws as enacted by Parliament and embodied in our Constitution. It is the MDT's policy that SPs avoid making unreasonable adjustments to a course if it will cause unjustifiable hardship. If a Candidate, or other course participant, feels that they are being unreasonably harassed or discriminated against, the matter should be reported to the MDT Administrator as a matter of urgency. The matter will be dealt with following the standard MDT appeals procedure.

### **A6. Privacy Policy** (Full Policy)

The MDT does not disclose to a third party any information about MDT office staff, SPs, or Candidates, that it holds, including contact details. Should SP, or Candidate information be required by a third party, prior written consent of the parties involved would be needed, before the MDT considered making any such disclosures.

This policy does not apply, however, to information that the MDT must disclose for quality assurance, moderation or certification purposes. Details on what this information is and who gets to see it is available on request.

## **A7. Access to Personal Records** (Full Policy)

Candidates have the right to access to their personal MDT records. Access must be requested in writing to the MDT Administrator, who would make the necessary arrangements. When accessing personal information, Candidates may be asked to provide proof of identification, where the office staff does not personally know them.

## **A8. Candidate Disciplinary Policy** (Full Policy)

To ensure all Candidates receive equal opportunities to gain maximum benefit from their time the following rule applies to all people who attend any MDT courses, either as participants (Candidates), or as observers. Any person who displays dysfunctional or disruptive behaviour may be asked to leave the course / assessment.

Dysfunctional/ disruptive behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- Continuous interruptions to the trainer or assessor
- Smoking in non-smoking areas
- Being disrespectful to other participants
- Harassment by using offensive, or abusive, language
- Sexual harassment of any sort
- Acting in an unsafe manner that places the individual, or others, at risk
- Acting in a manner detrimental to the equipment or the environment
- Refusing to participate in group activities when required to
- Absence at required times without prior notice, or making the necessary arrangements.

Any Candidate who is asked to leave a course / assessment has the right to appeal through the MDT appeals process.

## **A9. Re-Assessment Policy** (Full Policy)

If Candidates do not meet the assessment requirements for any qualification they may apply to be re-assessed or to re-do the assessment at a later date. This first re-assessment will not carry an additional MDT assessment fee. Each additional assessment after the first re assessment will carry the standard MDT assessment fee.

Candidates who are unable to gain competency after re-assessment despite their best efforts, may apply, within 14 days, to meet with their assessor to discuss how best to proceed with training and/ or assessment. In such situations, assessors would determine, with reference to the relevant records of training and/ or assessment, the best course of action in each case. Sometimes, remedial training may be recommended prior to re-assessment.

If a Candidate is unhappy with the outcome of this process he/ she may make a formal appeal, as per the MDT appeals process.

## **A10. Complaints, Grievances and Appeals**

The MDT respects the right of all Candidates to complaint, or to appeal, or to lodge any other grievance that may arise due to such persons association with the MDT and/ or its SPs. All such submissions must be reported within our quality assurance system, to the MDT Administrator at address - P.O. Box 662, Gillitts 3603, or [admin@mdt.za.org](mailto:admin@mdt.za.org). Further, submissions should be in writing and should include a request for confirmation of receipt, to ensure recognition of each case. A complaint/appeals form is available from the MDT website or administrator.

### **A10.1 Appeals Policy:**

The Service Providers (SPs) typically possesses knowledge and skills at a level far above that of the Candidates. Candidates should, therefore, respect the advice and experience of the SP and, ideally, avoid entering into dispute that diverts valuable time away from the task at hand.

However, if a Candidate has a genuine grievance, he/she should explain to the SP what the problem is, so a solution can be found and applied. In such cases, this should be all done in a considerate manner that causes the least possible disturbance to the flow of the course.

Regarding grievances that involve safety, Candidates should note that certain procedures, in some modules of MDT training, could appear, to an inexperienced person, to be dangerous. However, it must be said that the SPs are acutely aware of the risks involved and take utmost care to ensure that these are conducted safely, with all

due care. Any complaint based on safety issues should, therefore, be carefully considered and weighed up before grievance action is formally lodged with the MDT.

If disputes arise, the SPs try to resolve them by working towards a mutually agreeable solution. It is MDT policy to ensure that our Candidates are completely satisfied with the professionalism, course content and relevancy of the training and assessment.

If a solution cannot be found at the time, the Candidate should implement the following Grievance Procedure:

### **A10.2 Grievance Procedure**

#### Stage 1

The Candidate should approach the SP and give verbal details of the grievance. The SP will, within one (1) working day, respond verbally to the grievance and endeavour to satisfy the requirements of the Candidate.

#### Stage 2

Should the grievance not be resolved, the SP shall, within one week, call a meeting of all parties involved to discuss the matter. The aim of the meeting will be to clarify all issues and reach a consensus on a satisfactory resolution of the problems as perceived by all parties. An agreed timetable will be drawn up to define time scales of actions required. Minutes will be taken and copied to all present.

#### Stage 3

Should the grievance still not be resolved within one week of the meeting referred to in stage 2, the matter must be referred to the MDT Administration.

If a Candidate wishes to lodge an appeal against a decision as referred to above, or wishes to lodge an appeal against a SP, the following procedures shall apply:

### **A10.3 Appeals Procedure**

#### Stage 1

Within seven (7) days, the Candidate must communicate the appeal to the MDT Administration in writing.

#### Stage 2

After informing its-self of the situation, the MDT will ask the appellant to formally present his/her case (in private if requested) to a panel appointed by the National Management Committee. A timetable for hearing the matter will be mutually agreed upon. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible, a telephone discussion or other electronic means may be used. Minutes of this process will be maintained.

#### Stage 3

After hearing full details of the grievance and considering evidence from both sides, the appellant will be notified in writing of the outcome within five (5) working days. The reason for the decision and corrective action stipulated will be disclosed.

Should there be sufficient evidence of wrongdoing on the part of a SP, the MDT shall implement its Disciplinary procedure to fully investigate the matter further and make recommendations.

## **A11. Recognition of Qualifications (Mutual recognition policy)**

The MDT and its SPs are obligated to recognise qualifications and statements of attainment where another similar organisation has validly issued them. However, the MDT recognises that, due to the wide variance in the context and environment in which an individual's training and assessment took place, a particular qualification may not automatically grant equivalent rights, or other guarantees of capability to perform certain skills. Further, although a qualification issued by another organisation may be valid, the recipient of that qualification may not necessarily still be proficient many years after qualifying. This is made worse when the person concerned has not maintained his/ her skills through regular practice, or refresher training.

So, the MDT must consider issues such as 'currency' and 'context' (the ability to perform under specific conditions). The MDT and its Service Providers assert their right, therefore, to assess any individual applying for a conversion of any other similar qualification to MDT Certification, regardless of what qualifications are held, before assigning an MDT certification.

This approach must be seen in the context where, when working in the mountains, or performing mountain-related skills, a single error could have catastrophic results.

## A12. Moderation

A minimum of 25% of all assessments undertaken by each SP will be moderated. Candidates must understand that this process may change the results they initially receive from their assessors, but that it does not affect Candidates' right to appeal against any such changes. Should you receive a course quality assurance questionnaire after your assessment, you must complete it and return it to the Administrator as certification will not occur until this has happened.

## B. WAIVER RELEASE FORM

### B1. Disclaimer/ waiver release/ indemnity forms – a sample

An example of a disclaimer may go something like this:

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"I understand that I will be required to participate in outdoor activities such as mountain walking, rock climbing, abseiling, scrambling, camping and/ or other adventure based activities and furthermore acknowledge that there are certain risks involved in such activities which may result in injury or even death. With this knowledge, to the extent permitted by law, it is my intention by this instrument to exempt and release the MDT, its management and Service Providers and all related entities from liability or responsibility whatsoever for personal injury, property damage or wrongful death however caused, including but not limited to the negligence of the released parties, whether passive or active. I have read, understand and agree to this liability release and assumption of risk, and accept the conditions as stated.

I understand that in the unlikely event of my requiring medical attention and I am unable to give verbal consent, that I authorise the programme providers to arrange suitable treatment for which I accept responsibility of any costs incurred.

I understand that during my training, I may be required to attend 'on-the-job' training under the supervision of other instructors and leaders. I understand that my conduct during such sessions will affect the quality of the experience for those clients who are attending the activity either favourably or adversely. I therefore agree to represent the MDT and my Service Provider in a professional manner both in dress and bearing. Furthermore I understand that my conduct during this training includes a responsibility to the clients for their safety and well-being. I hereby acknowledge my responsibility in this manner and agree to accept responsibility for my actions in this regard."

This is included here to serve as an example and is not necessarily the same as forms that MDT Service Providers may use for their courses. However, the basic underlying conditions would apply to most forms indemnifying SPs from liability during MDT courses.

Candidates are required by SPs to complete and to sign (and have co-signed by witnesses) such forms before they can participate in the courses.

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**Note: This document has been written up to accommodate a very wide range of circumstances some of which may not apply to you. If you are not sure how a section applies to you, or wish to negotiate some alternative arrangement with your SP, we encourage you to do so in good time.**

**Please Note:** You have contracted a Service Provider of the MDT to undertake training and/ or assessment but are in no way contracted to the MDT itself. The MDT only has financial and contractual dealings with Service Providers. The MDT is only an administrative, quality setting, monitoring and assurance body.

Therefore please address all queries with regards your training and/ or assessment course to the Service Provider you are dealing with. However, suggestions, comments or appeals concerning the MDT Programme may be addressed directly to the MDT Administrator.

Your Service Providers association with the MDT is as an approved Trainer and/ or Assessor, authorised to use the Training and/ or Assessment programmes the MDT has established. Service Providers who advertise that they offer MDT courses are legally responsible to the MDT and its quality assurance systems.

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## Your Notes & Questions: