

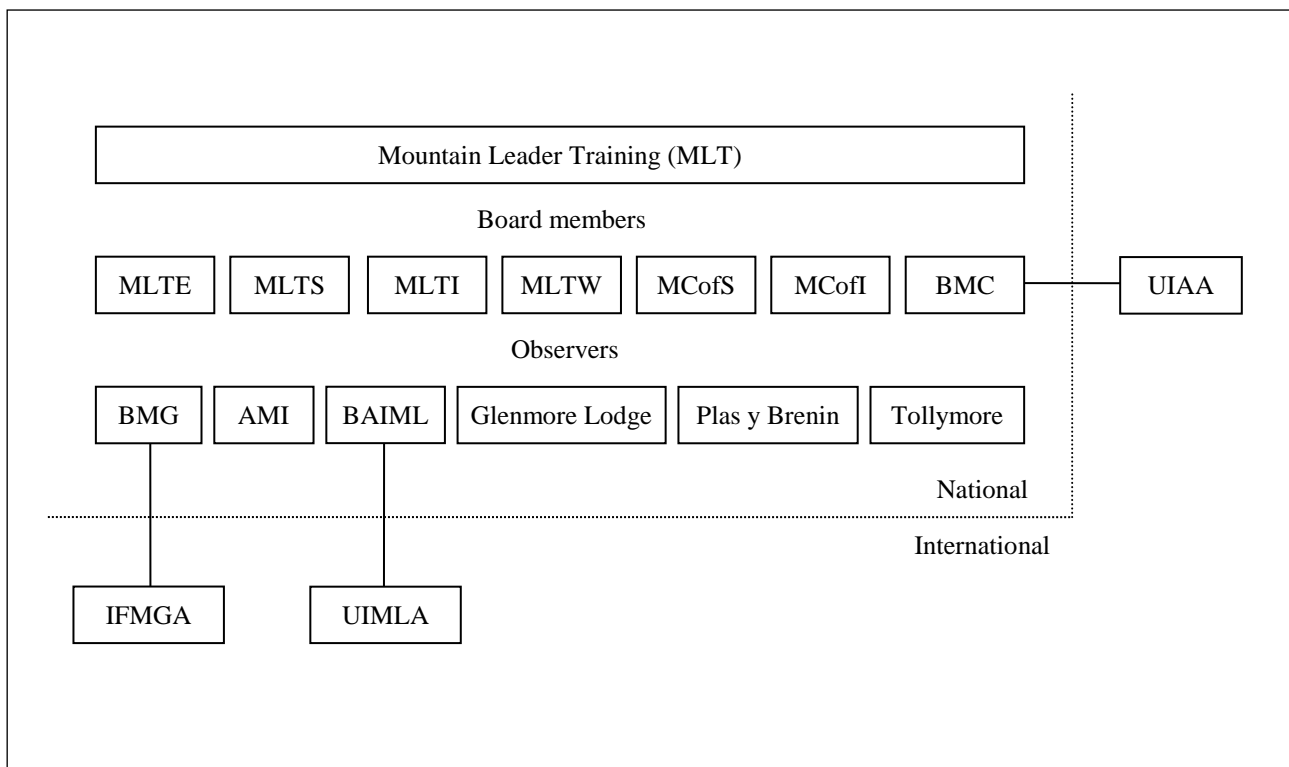
Instructor & Guide Certification in Great Britain

Introduction

The debate about certification of instructors and guides in Norway has been ongoing for some time and has aroused much interest. In Great Britain, there has been a respected system of instructor qualifications in place for decades - a system of both nationally and internationally recognised qualifications for instructors and guides of climbing and mountaineering activities. I hope this article can contribute to the wider understanding in Norway that a professional qualification such as the IFMGA Mountain Guide can exist alongside a system of national qualifications and that the main organisations can have a successful and close working relationship.

Similar to Norway, climbing as a pastime has existed in Great Britain since the 1880's and the sport has become incredibly popular. In fact, the first mountain guides were certified by the BMC (*British Mountaineering Council*) in 1946. By the early 1960's, the MLTB (*Mountain Leader Training Board*) was established and this organisation created a system of national qualifications for leaders and instructors of climbing and mountaineering activities in addition to the new IFMGA (*International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations*) Mountain Guide qualification which emerged in 1966. These qualifications have been developed during the last 50 years and are now respected throughout the world as a benchmark for similar qualifications in other countries.

The diagram shows the associations in Great Britain and how they are organised.



Mountain Leader Training (MLT) (previously MLTB) is the umbrella organisation responsible for national standards and administration of qualifications, together with certification of training and assessment course providers in Great Britain. MLT is run by a board with representatives from the four MLT offices in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, from the Mountaineering Councils of Scotland and Ireland, and from the BMC. In addition to these, there are observers from the BMG, BAIML, AMI and the three main training centres at Glenmore Lodge, Plas y Brenin and Tollymore. MLT is equivalent to Norsk Fjellsportforum.

Once qualified, an instructor or guide becomes a member of an association in order to work professionally. Membership indicates to clients that the instructor or guide holds the appropriate qualification, has liability insurance and is undergoing CPD (continuing professional development).

In Great Britain there are three associations for professional instructors and guides:

The Association of British Mountain Guides (BMG) was established in 1975 to administrate the International Mountain Guide qualification in Great Britain and represent British mountain guides. The BMG is a member of the IFMGA which ensures the same standard across all 26 member countries. Currently, there are 200 British mountain guides. BMG is equivalent to Nortind.

The British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML) dates back to 1989 when the EMLC (*European Mountain Leader Commission*) was formed. Their work produced a common standard for the EML (*European Mountain Leader*) qualification. In 2004, the EMLC was replaced by UIMLA (*Union of International Mountain Leader Associations*) to allow for development of a true international qualification. The association is continuing to expand with new countries applying to join each year. BAIML administrates the IML qualification in Great Britain and represents the 400 British International Mountain Leaders.

The IFMGA International Mountain Guide and UIMLA International Mountain Leader are the only two professional mountain guiding qualifications recognised internationally.

The Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) was established in 1990 to represent holders of the MIA (*Mountain Instructor Award*) and MIC (*Mountain Instructor Certificate*) which are the two highest national qualifications in Great Britain. The AMI has over 850 members.

The skills covered by each of the four qualifications mentioned are shown in the table. In addition to the MIA and MIC, there are also six other national qualifications for skills such as indoor climbing and hill walking.

Skills	National		International	
	MIA	MIC	IML	Guide
Summer mountain walking	x	x	x	x
Summer rock climbing	x	x		x
Winter mountain walking		x	x	x
Winter snow & ice climbing		x		x
Avalanche skills		x	x	x
Altitude skills			x	x
Snowshoeing			x	x
Alpinism & glacial terrain				x
Off-piste skiing				x

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) must also be mentioned as it is an important cornerstone for climbing and mountaineering traditions in Great Britain. The BMC has represented British climbers and mountaineers for over 100 years and is now backed by over 60.000 members. The BMC works with access, conservation, club development and safety standards. The BMC works closely with the MLT and also represents British interests internationally via UIAA. The BMC is equivalent to Norsk Klatreforbund.

In conclusion, Norway already has a good system of qualifications, which is similar in many ways to the system in Great Britain. What is needed is open dialog between the main organisations involved to create a modern system of qualifications that match the needs of today's mountain-

going public. It may be true that the NF National Standard needs adjustment to include aspects of commercial guiding and instruction and it may be necessary to establish a professional association to represent the interests of NF instructors (like AMI). Norway is in the luxurious position of being home to some of the greatest mountain terrain in the world, and there are certainly enough mountains to allow Guides and NF instructors to work side by side.

Links

MLT	www.mltuk.org
BMG	www.bmg.org.uk
BAIML	www.baiml.org
AMI	www.ami.org.uk
BMC	www.bmc.org.uk
Glenmore Lodge	www.glenmorelodge.org.uk
Plas y Brenin	www.pyb.co.uk
Tollymore	www.tollymore.com

About the author

Peter Chapman is a 36 year old Englishman. He currently lives in Denmark with his wife and two children. Peter has 20 years experience of mountain walking, climbing and mountaineering and is an International Mountain Leader and NF Breinstruktør. Peter works in the mountains throughout the world (often in Norway). See his website www.mountain-environment.com.