



UIAA training standards take on increased importance

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Participants from 13 countries have met in Wales to discuss the importance of international training standards and exchanged experiences on developing training programmes.

The UIAA Training Standards Seminar took place from May 5-7 and was hosted by Mountain Leader Training UK and Mountain Centre at Plas y Brenin in Wales.

The seminar focused on the benefits of having [international standards for training schemes](#) and the importance of local knowledge. When a mountain leader or instructor chooses to work in a different country, it is vital that their new employer is aware of the knowledge and skills they already have. If the mountain leader has gone through a UIAA approved training scheme, employers will not have to assess basic skills, such as rope work. They can then focus on training and assessment of skills and knowledge specific to the new country or locality.

It is of course not possible to develop a training programme that can equip every leader to deal with all possible working environments. A qualified instructor from a land-locked country such as Switzerland might have no sea-cliff experience but will have other transferable skills. They will only have to be informed of issues that are specific to this new environment, (in this example tidal awareness would be important).

The delegates also discussed the fact that some countries or regions demand that mountain leaders have specific qualifications or are members of certain professional bodies. This means there are also legal restrictions to cross-border recognition of qualifications. At the seminar, the delegates were able to experience UK climbing, including visits to slate quarries and a sea cliff. Exploring the quarries underlined the importance of understanding national laws and local by-laws. When mountain leaders from other countries visit Wales they might not be informed of local access rules or laws requiring specific qualifications.

The seminar consisted of a good mix of practical and theoretical sessions. Most delegates made a short presentation on their federation and its approved training schemes. This gave a valuable insight into the various levels of development in mountaineering qualifications and different social backgrounds. Some countries, such as Italy, have developed a training scheme over a very long period, while others, such as Japan, had to develop a training scheme at short notice at the request of the government which had reacted to an accident.

The seminar was attended by 20 delegates from India, Spain, Belgium, Israel, Portugal, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, South Africa, Italy, Canada, Wales and England. In addition, three guest speakers from UK organisations were invited to make short presentations.

The event was organised in connection with the UIAA Mountaineering Commission meeting and the British Mountaineering Council International “trad” climbing festival (May 11-17, 2008).