

Frequently Asked Questions answered by Steve Long, President of the Training Panel:

What are accredited qualifications?

Accredited qualifications, also known as regulated qualifications are those that are reviewed, recognised and monitored by a regulatory body in order to ensure that they meet specific criteria and quality standards. For mountaineering activities the appropriate regulatory body at an international level is the UIAA which moderates its member organisations through a validation process.

What are the advantages of accredited over non-accredited qualifications?

The most obvious advantage of accredited over non-accredited qualifications is that the accredited ones provide the learners and stakeholders with a guarantee of quality of both the qualification programme and the awarding body that offers accredited qualifications. Non-accredited qualifications, on the other hand, are not regulated and there is no external independent guarantee that they meet appropriate qualification standards-making it difficult for a sponsor or government department to tell whether they are fit for their purpose, whether they include relevant content or even if appropriate methodology for assessment is used.

How does the UIAA ensure high quality of accredited qualifications and their compliance to the Mountain Qualification labels?

The regulators use several methods to ensure high quality of accredited qualifications before and after they are listed in the Register of Accredited Qualifications (The Training Management system - TMS). In order to be recognised and have their qualifications accredited by the regulators, the awarding organisations first has to fulfil the UIAA's affiliation requirements before being allowed to register with the Training Panel, at which point an experienced mentor or validator is assigned in order to help with the process.

The Mountain Qualification Label services carefully review both the awarding organisation and the proposed qualification, culminating in a field visit to compare the course reality with the paperwork. If the qualification programme meets the UIAA's criteria, it is recognised and listed online. If the programme does not meet the set criteria, it is rejected, and an action plan is negotiated to help reach the standard. In order to make sure that the accredited qualifications maintain appropriate standards and quality, they are kept under review by the UIAA Training Panel which also has the power to withdraw accreditation.

What are the other advantages of registration and accreditation?

Training Officers for registered member organisations will be kept informed of seminar reports and training advice gathered from the UIAA Commissions. This

will benefit members by gaining immediate access to advice on accepted current best practice. Registered associations also have access to the UIAA's Alpine Handbook for the use of their trainees.

Accredited qualification programmes are managed through the UIAA Database, known as the Training Management System. Federations can print a copy of the accreditation certificate, which is protected with the UIAA's Safety Label. It is recommended also to include QR code or other "signposting" to the online certificate on the federation cards issued to qualified leaders and instructors.

Although the UIAA Mountain Qualification Labels are intended primarily for voluntary use within the member organisation's home borders, the organisation is free to recommend the qualifications as appropriate training also for professional leaders or instructors operating within its borders. There is no obligation for cross-border accreditation, but several federations have already recognised the benefits of shared core syllabus areas and have developed simple systems to accredit prior learning to simplify career pathways between countries.

What is the difference between training and a qualification?

Training can be divided into:

1. Unregulated basic skills training, which is provided for individuals and might be delivered by pretty well anybody.
2. Regulated basic skillstraining, similar target group but provided only by instructors authorised by a recognised body
3. Qualifications: Again, these can be regulated or non-regulated - however unless there is a bona fide training organisation overseeing this there is little room for wider recognition beyond the trainer.
 - ✓ Leader training - ideally with skills training as a pre-requisite (or an exemption process) Leaders are simply qualified to supervise a basic session, usually for novices in some or all aspects of the activity.
 - ✓ Instructor training - sometimes linked to leader training as an optional or essential pre-requisite.

Prior to 2021 the UIAA focussed entirely on accrediting regulated qualifications for leaders and instructors.

What are the requirements for accreditation?

1. The courses are administered by member federations and/or their nominated training body (i.e. delegated but overseen)
2. Therefore we require evidence of governance system, syllabus, prospectus, provider induction process, train the trainer/assessor ;
3. The process towards UIAA accreditation is mentored- the member organisation registers in the TMS and is then helped towards fulfilling the above requirements;
4. Exceptions to the above are the IFMGA and the UIMLA which are both UIAA members and we have willingly endorsed their QA system without requiring an inspection(several members of the Training Panel have first-hand experience of IFMGA and UIMLA training);
5. The UIAA does issue guidance on what the syllabus and prospectus should include, but this is very much an outline. and deliberately non-prescriptive.

What is UIAA certified skills training?

In 2019 the UIAA began piloting certified skills training programmes. The idea is that we will authorise member federations (including IFMGA and UIMLA) to nominate skills trainers who will work to an outline syllabus and quality manual, and issue approval for UIAA certification at the end of the course. Candidates may be required to complete a short online test (in their own language) before the being able to gain the certificate). The skills trainers will be required to hold an instructor certificate for the relevant category of activity, and the certificates will be managed through the UIAA' s Training Management System. These are not qualifications, but evidence of quality assured training.

It is planned to formalise this system once the COVID panedemic is adequately contained.