

CLIMBING HIGH

Guy Jarvis, Executive Officer for Mountain Training England, takes time to talk through the new climbing awards



AUTHOR: Guy Jarvis. Guy is the Executive Officer for Mountain Training England. He has been a secondary school teacher, climbing wall manager, overseas expedition leader, D of E manager and a founder trustee of the NICAS scheme. When he's not working, or being a Dad, he tries to turn off his phone and escape to the Alps.

Q Please can you briefly recap the changes to the climbing awards earlier this year.

A The Single Pitch Award, Climbing Wall Award and Climbing Wall Leading Award have all been updated. Holders of these awards now all hold the new Rock Climbing Instructor, Climbing Wall Instructor and Climbing Wall Development Instructor qualifications respectively – without lifting a finger! These three schemes have had content on teaching skills added to their syllabi, as well as the management of an assistant. The Rock Climbing Instructor training course is now three days long to accommodate a whole day of training on working in the indoor environment.

Q Is there a transition period for people who may have started their training by not signed off yet?

A Yes. As we introduced a sport climbing requirement for the Rock Climbing Instructor we have introduced a year's moratorium on this for those going ahead for assessment before April 2019. The changes to the syllabus can be addressed by attending any one of the **'Bridging the Gap'** courses that are being run around the country through the Mountain Training Association. The new scheme handbooks with their guidance on the updated syllabi are all available on our website www.mountain-training.org.



Find out more about Bridging the Gap courses (if you started training before the changes and haven't yet been signed off) go to:
www.mountain-training.org/associations/mountain-training-association/about/association-news/bridge-the-gap

Q How do the changes affect individuals who already have a qualification?

A They all have the new one! Their digital record on our online Candidate Management System will show that they hold the new qualification, but their training and assessment record will show that they attended courses of the older named schemes.

Clearly a lot of research and work underpinned these changes, based on changes to the sector over the past 15 years. Now you are a few months in, can you tell us how things are going?

Q Are there any trends in take up of the new awards?

A It's still early days and too soon to draw any conclusions, but despite shaking up the climbing qualifications for first time in 15 years, registrations have remained strong. For Mountain Training England, the Rock Climbing Instructor registrations rose last quarter for the first time in five years. There was a small dip in Climbing Wall Instructor registrations over the summer which may be explained by more candidates opting for the Rock Climbing Instructor scheme, or it could have just been the hot weather.

Q Have there been any surprises and/or challenges during the launch of this phase one?

A So far it has all been remarkably smooth and uneventful. I would like to think that we did a lot of homework and preparation with our providers to achieve this. I remember when we sent the news email explaining the changes to all our climbing award holders and candidates in the spring – there were 56,000 of them. I was holding my breath!



Thinking about professional development?

You might also be interested in IOL Leadership Workshops. For more information visit www.outdoor-learning.org/Good-Practice/Develop-as-a-Professional/IOL-Leadership-Workshops

Q Is there any feedback from the sector now the new qualifications are up and running?

A Yes. I'm pleased to say that our providers report that a three-day Rock Climbing Instructor training course has been a huge improvement. It allows for less travelling to venues and shorter, but more productive training days. Most report that spending more time on indoor skills and teaching skills sets up the course really well. They also like the ability to run two-day Rock Climbing Instructor courses for candidates who have already completed Climbing Wall Instructor training. The other two schemes have had less changes and appear to be going well.

Q Earlier in the year you mentioned there will be phase two and phase three changes. Please can you share any updates on what the changes are, when it's likely to happen, and what this might mean for the sector

A Phase Two happens in January 2019. We will launch the new Indoor Climbing Assistant and four Rock Skills courses; Introduction, Intermediate, Learning to Lead Sport and Learning to Lead Trad. The Assistant is new ground for Mountain Training in that it will provide a pathway for a wide demographic of people to get involved with climbing instruction, whilst under the careful supervision of a fully qualified instructor. Volunteers, young people, parents, teachers, those with disabilities or those supporting others can all get involved with climbing groups through this new scheme. The new Rock Skills courses will introduce a nationally benchmarked pathway of training for rock climbing that will be really useful for young and old, indoor climbers and aspiring instructors alike.

Phase Three will occur later in the spring/summer 2019 when we launch the new Rock Climbing Development Instructor. This will create a pathway for talented climbing instructors to develop participants' climbing skills, including lead climbers, in a single pitch environment. ■

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For more information about award changes visit www.mountain-training.org



If you enjoyed reading this, pop over to page 20 to read the interview with IOL's Neal Anderson on occupational standards.



CLIMBING PATHWAY

 Direct Entry

 Skills Courses

 Assistant Qualification

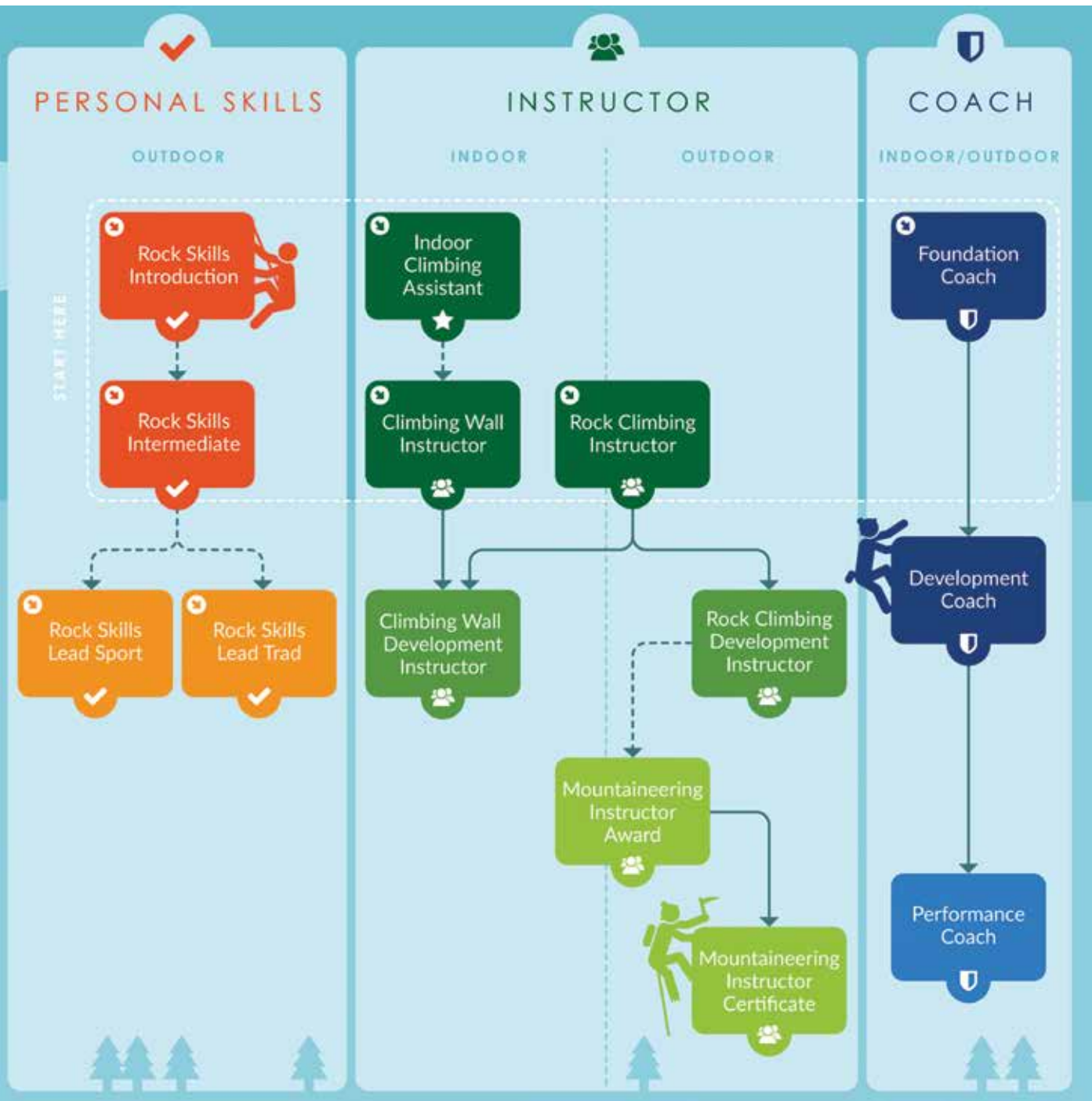
 Leadership Qualifications

 Coaching Qualifications

 Recommended Progression

WHY CHANGE?

In autumn 2015 we began the process of reviewing our climbing qualifications to determine if they were fit to serve the needs of the outdoor sector into the 2020's and beyond. We recognised that the sector has changed greatly over the last 15 years: traditional outdoor centres and school-based outdoor education programmes have declined, while freelance instruction, indoor climbing, bouldering centres and commercial provision have all grown.



WHAT HAPPENED?

After gaining a lot of feedback from a wide range of climbing award holders we commissioned an independent report from the University of Central Lancashire. They surveyed over 1400 instructors and 173 organisations for their views. Five main points were reported:

- The need to strengthen the 'Instructor' role. Organisations wanted more than just supervisors - they wanted the ability to inspire participants and foster their development.
- The need to develop teaching skills throughout the awards, thus enhancing the instructor role.
- Support for an assistant role in the earlier awards was strong. Our qualifications were often seen as difficult to access and nearly half of all the organisations surveyed ran their own in-house schemes.
- The importance of learning from and maximising experience was highly regarded by instructors and organisations alike. The quality and variety of this experience was seen as key.
- The need for trainer education. Good instruction requires more than just technical skill and training courses also need to address the role of supporting participants' development.

WHAT IS THE AIM?

Through a review of the whole awards structure, we want to:

- Enable an increased diversity of instructors, more reflective of modern society.
- Enable progression through scheme pathways, thus encouraging onward development.
- Develop high quality instructors who reflect the ethos of Mountain Training.
- Enable a process that values prior learning and experience, upon which good judgement depends.
- Create strong bridges from participation into Mountain Training qualification pathways.