



**Mountain
Training**

Foundation Coach

Candidate handbook





Contents

1. Qualification pathway	4
2. Course structure	7
3. Course delivery.....	7
4. Awarding organisation	7
Syllabus and guidance notes	8
1. Coaching foundations	8
2. Reflective practice	12
3. Technical competence.....	14
Appendix 1 – Coaching portfolio and session planning	16
Appendix 2 – Coaching assessment	17
Appendix 3 - Additional information for Foundation Coaches	19



Preface

This handbook has been designed to support candidates through Mountain Training’s Foundation Coach qualification. It contains useful information about the various stages in the qualification as well as the syllabus and guidance notes.

Mountain Training recognises that walking, climbing, and mountaineering are activities that have associated risks. Mountain Training’s instructional qualifications provide training and assessment to help coaches develop the skills to manage the risks associated with the environment in which they operate and to enable new participants to have positive experiences.

All instructors and coaches owe a heightened duty of care to the people they lead, their colleagues, and the wider public who may be impacted by their actions.

Mountain Training qualified coaches will act in the best interests of their group, individual group members and others, and they will always act within their competence to prevent harm to them.



Rock Climbing

Rock Climbing by Libby Peter has been written to support developing climbers and coaches. It is packed with essential information and techniques, particularly the following chapters: Chapter 3 Warming up and avoiding injuries, Chapter 4 Movement skills, Chapter 5 Improving your climbing, Chapter 13 Inspiring others and Chapter 20 The law and risk management.



1. Qualification pathway

1.1 Introduction

The Foundation Coach qualification gives climbing coaches the skills required to coach the fundamental movement skills of climbing. Foundation Coaches will usually be concerned with the stimulating delivery of a single session to a group of individuals.

1.2 Scope of the qualification

A qualified Foundation Coach can:

- Coach fundamental climbing movement skills.
- Plan and deliver a coaching session to a group of climbers.

1.2.1 Terrain

The location in which a Foundation Coach can deliver their sessions depends on their other qualification(s). A Foundation Coach must be appropriately experienced and qualified to supervise safe sessions in the environment in which they choose to coach e.g. a site-specific sign-off by a Technical Advisor for bouldering; a Climbing Wall Instructor for roped climbing; Climbing Wall Development Instructor for coaching lead climbing or Rock Climbing Instructor to coach on single pitch crags etc.

1.2.2 Exclusions

The qualification does not cover:

- The safety skills of climbing or mountaineering
- Group supervision

(both of these are covered by Mountain Training's climbing instructor qualifications or a site-specific sign off)

1.3 Stages in the qualification

1.3.1 Registration prerequisites

- You must be at least 16 years old at the date of registration.
- You must have a genuine interest in climbing and the coaching of groups on climbing walls.
- You must have at least six months experience of climbing on a variety of climbing walls.



- You must be a member of a mountaineering council (BMC, Mountaineering Ireland or Mountaineering Scotland).

1.3.2 Training prerequisites:

- You must be registered on the qualification.
- It is strongly recommended that you have attended a FUNdamentals of Climbing 1 workshop. Many candidates find attendance of FUNdas 2 is also beneficial at this stage.

1.3.3 Consolidation period:

Practise coaching as many different types of individuals and groups as possible, ideally over a range of time frames and for a variety of objectives.

The provider who delivered your training will be able to give you feedback and a personalised action plan for your consolidation period.

There is currently no time limit on the validity of a training course and some candidates may take several years to complete the qualification.



Our association can help you as you work towards one of our qualifications. We are building a community of confident and expert leaders, instructors and coaches, that we hope you will join.

1.3.4 Assessment prerequisites:

- You must have attended a Foundation Coach training course.
- You must have attended a FUNdamentals of Climbing 1 workshop.
- You must have updated DLOG with your climbing coaching experience to include a minimum of 15 coaching sessions since attending training.*
- You must have added reflective comments in the 'description' tab for at least five of these coaching sessions.*
- You must have prepared lesson plans which can be reviewed by the assessor (before the practical assessment).*



- You must be appropriately experienced and qualified to supervise safe sessions in the environment in which you choose to coach e.g. Bouldering Wall Instructor for bouldering; a Climbing Wall Instructor for roped climbing; Climbing Wall Development Instructor for coaching lead climbing and Rock Climbing Instructor to coach on single pitch crags.
- You must have completed a Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport module.

* See also Appendix 3 - Additional information for Foundation Coaches.

1.3.5 Pathway options

It is possible to proceed from Foundation Coach training to Development Coach training without attending Foundation Coach assessment, provided you meet the Development Coach training prerequisites.

1.3.6 First aid

It is the responsibility of the coach and/or their employers to evaluate their likely role and the type of situations that they can reasonably expect to encounter and to maintain current appropriate first aid training and qualifications.

In the case of Foundation Coaches working with a site-specific accreditation, it is the responsibility of the climbing wall management and the technical expert to ensure that adequate first aid provision is readily available.

1.3.7 Safeguarding

Children and vulnerable adults deserve to enjoy their sport in a safe and inclusive environment. It is an essential requirement that coaches attend a recognised workshop for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in sport. As a consequence, coaches will have a raised awareness of the tell-tale signs of abuse, and develop the tools and confidence required to deal with any issues sensitively, appropriately and effectively should the need ever arise. A coach should be able to identify and recognise good coaching practice, understand values and feelings in relation to abuse and recognise their potential impact on a response.

Nationally recognised courses are regionally available from UK Coaching amongst other providers.

1.3.8 Accredited prior learning

We want to make it easy for experienced and active coaches currently working at a high level to access our coaching qualifications at the most appropriate point.



If you have extensive prior learning through an equivalent coaching qualification, and current experience of coaching climbing, you may be able to apply for Accredited Prior Learning (APL). Coaches from another sport who have completed equivalent coach education courses may be able to gain exemption from Foundation Coach training and go straight to either Foundation Coach assessment or Development Coach training.

All applications for APL will be reviewed by Mountain Training UK & Ireland.

2. Course structure

2.1 Training

Training will involve a minimum of 8 hours contact time. Training courses may be delivered over a number of evenings/sessions to fit with climbing clubs and coaching academies.

Results: Completed, Not yet completed, Withdrew, Did not show, Exemption.

2.2 Assessment

Assessments are usually bespoke and you should contact a provider about arranging your assessment. As a result there may not be many listed on the course finder.

Assessment will involve a minimum of two hours contact time.

Results: Pass, Defer, Withdrew, Did not show.

3 Course delivery

3.1 Training

Course directors are approved by Mountain Training UK & Ireland.

Min. course size: 4, max. course size: 12, max. ratio: 1:12.

3.2 Assessment

Course directors are approved by Mountain Training UK & Ireland.

Max. ratio: 1:1 during practical assessment.



4 Awarding organisation

Mountain Training UK & Ireland





Syllabus and guidance notes



1. Coaching foundations

A Foundation Coach needs the coaching skills to be able to deliver and develop robust foundations for a climber's future development. The emphasis is on the quality delivery of the essential behaviours of good coaching.

1.1 Coaching behaviours

- 1.1.1 Demonstrate a basic knowledge of learning styles.
- 1.1.2 Demonstrate an ability to adapt the coaching style to meet individual needs.

Guidance

As a Foundation Coach, you need to be able to deliver to a wide range of individuals within a group. Teaching models (and a rudimentary understanding of learning styles) help to make sure there is "something for everyone" in your delivery of concepts and techniques. Your sessions need to take place in a welcoming, inclusive and supportive environment, where all participants are engaged and feel able to participate.



1.2 Planning

- 1.2.1 Check the underlying aims and objectives of the session.
- 1.2.2 Demonstrate preparation to deal with changing circumstances in a session, e.g. client ability, wall availability, etc.
- 1.2.3 Be aware of and comply with current legislation regarding children and vulnerable people.
- 1.2.4 Contribute effectively to session planning within a coaching team.

Guidance

Identifying learning outcomes or a clear purpose for the session, will help you to deliver progressive and structured sessions, with a clear direction. As a Foundation Coach you will often be assisting a Development Coach who will set the learning outcomes for each of your sessions as part of a longer term progression, course or scheme. It is important that you can contribute to this planning process and so focus the delivery of the session on learning outcomes rather than just activity.

1.3 Preparing and concluding

- 1.3.1 Brief individuals and the group appropriately.
- 1.3.2 Issue appropriate rock climbing equipment and check correct fitting and use.
- 1.3.3 Store equipment appropriately after each session.

Guidance

You should understand the impact on group motivation of a clear briefing and the group understanding the plan. The management of the whole session should then support this.

1.4 Managing

- 1.4.1 Demonstrate an ability to work under the direction of a supervising coach.
- 1.4.2 Show an awareness of group management strategies and techniques.



1.4.3 Demonstrate an understanding of how to avoid common problems.

1.4.4 Manage individual and group needs effectively.

Guidance

Many of these topics will be covered in Climbing Wall Instructor or in-house training on session management with groups. As a Foundation Coach you should be able to adapt these skills to a variety of walls and groups as required.

1.5 Sporting values

1.5.1 Help develop a positive attitude towards climbing and lifelong participation.

Guidance

Climbing is a great sport which people can enjoy from infancy to a ripe old age. Challenged by choice, and personal ability, it is possible for climbers to develop their skills and enjoy their climbing for many years. Consider how you would...

1.6 Movement skills

1.6.1 Explain, demonstrate and evaluate the fundamental movement skills and principles of climbing.

1.6.2 Identify and apply appropriate games and tasks to develop the 'FUNdamentals' of climbing movement.

Guidance

It is important that you can demonstrate key skills and understand the roles that demonstration and instruction play in the learning process. It is also important that you understand that the participants need to practise and apply their learning.

Many inexperienced coaches struggle to select games that deliver the essential techniques and develop particular skills. Games should be linked to learning outcomes, rather than just for the sake of it. Furthermore, within the group there may be a wide range of abilities and preferences for learning and delivery. It is therefore important to have a number of varied strategies to cope with the needs of such individuals.



1.7 Physiology

- 1.7.1 Demonstrate an understanding of warming up and injury avoidance techniques.

Guidance

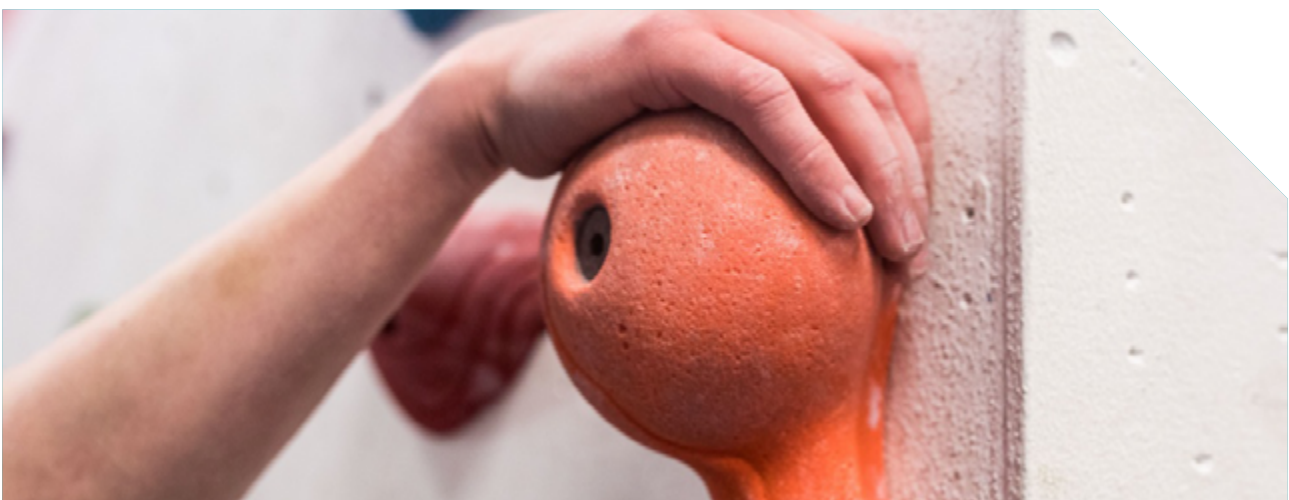
As a Foundation Coach you need to have a variety of warm up drills and exercises to hand. Warm ups should be tailored to the group, the session aims, the situation and conditions. Whilst development is actively encouraged, whatever their level of ability or understanding, it should be moderated by the need for long term injury prevention and development of best practice.

Coaching foundations top tips

The basic and essential foundations of good coaching are surprisingly simple. Good coaches require:

- The questioning and observational skills to find a starting point and identify the skill level of the participants, having the ability to modify the delivery accordingly.
- The ability to clearly demonstrate the 'FUNdamental' skills of climbing.
- The understanding of when and how a succinct explanation is required to provide essential detail.
- Coupled with the understanding that all this may be wasted unless the climbers get the chance to practise and apply these skills for themselves.

The focus of the Foundation Coach qualification is on performing these basics well.





2. Reflective practice

The culture of reflective practice and striving for continual improvement is a fundamental feature in the development of high quality coaches and climbers alike.

2.1 Giving feedback

Show an understanding of the role of feedback for participants by:

- 2.1.1 Demonstrating an awareness of when to give feedback.
- 2.1.2 Providing appropriate feedback for participants and reports to the supervising coach.

2.2 Evaluating

- 2.2.1 Show an understanding of the reasons of evaluating a session.
- 2.2.2 Evaluate the success of a session by:
 - 2.2.2.1 assessing the appropriateness of the session aims and objectives, and the activities used to achieve them;
 - 2.2.2.2 contributing effectively to a session review with the coaching team, including self-evaluation.



Guidance

You should understand the need for, and appropriate timing of, succinct and meaningful feedback that helps your climbers develop and achieve their potential. You need to understand that different people and situations may require varied feedback methods and be able to adapt your approach accordingly.

A culture of reflective practice will enable you to review and modify your sessions and delivery. A simple 'Plan-Do-Review' cycle should be encouraged and implemented wherever possible.

The long-term development of climbers is influenced by the feedback they receive, the time they spend practising new skills in varied situations and a healthy understanding of the learning journey. If you manage these factors well, motivated climbers can continue to develop beyond the end of the session.





3. Technical competence

Whilst your technical competence will already have been assessed as part of a site-specific accreditation or instructor qualification, the Foundation Coach qualification will assess how you make use of those skills in the facilitation of effective learning.

3.1 Equipment

- 3.1.1 Identify equipment suitable for personal and group use at any given climbing wall.
- 3.1.2 Demonstrate the ability to use climbing wall equipment appropriately.
- 3.1.3 Demonstrate a basic understanding of the use and limitations of different types of surface, hold, safety mats and anchors.
- 3.1.4 Show a basic understanding of the safety chain.

3.2 Belaying

- 3.2.1 Connect self and others to the rope for belaying.
- 3.2.2 Choose and fit suitable harnesses.
- 3.2.3 Use belay systems effectively.
- 3.2.4 Hold falls and control lowers.
- 3.2.5 Supervise others belaying.

3.3 The climbing wall environment

- 3.3.1 Show an awareness of both general and locally important rules and regulations, and demonstrate an ability to obtain and comply with this information.
- 3.3.2 Demonstrate an awareness of responsibilities to the general public, including other facility users and the wider climbing community.
- 3.3.3 Be aware of the hazards presented to other site users by the actions of a group, and act in such a way that these are minimised.



Guidance

Your technical competence supports the safe delivery of your coaching sessions and should not be neglected as you develop your coaching skills. By role modelling best practice in climbing walls or at the crag, you will enable and empower climbers to transfer their skills and behaviours to new and varied venues. This can only ever be good for their motivation and long term development in climbing.





Appendix 1 – Coaching portfolio and session planning

Session planning is an important skill and an underlying tool in developing climber-centred coaching sessions that deliver the desired learning outcomes. It is important to find a system that suits you and suits your style. Furthermore, the planning system should suit the needs of your situation, the needs of your climbers, and facilitate appropriate review and development between you and them.

Whether you choose to view the planning process ‘top down’ (from Performance Coach down to the individual session) or ‘bottom up’ (from the individual session to the long term development), there can be no doubt that the long term development of climbers may come under the care, guidance and coaching of several coaches. It therefore helps to understand, and to be able to explain, where each session fits into the long term picture. It is important for you to develop your own tools, but here are some ideas to help you get started.

Think about the goal setting and session planning session as a nested development – a bit like Russian Matryoshka dolls. Starting with long term plans and aims, it is possible to break the plan down into year-long macro cycles of development. Planning this long term development is usually the remit of the Performance Coach. Within each year, we can break the annual plan down into eight week blocks. Whether these are terms or periods of development leading to assessments or competitions, a climber’s big red-point attempt, or a particular climbing holiday or opportunity, the planning of these blocks is usually the remit of the Development Coach.

Finally, it helps to break each eight-week block down to the individual weeks for the climber. Each week will have a range of complementary sessions to deliver the planned outcomes and development. In turn, each session can be individually planned and delivered. The delivery of this session is often the remit of the Foundation Coach.

Whether we are planning periodised training for an event, or planning a progression through a series of weekly National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme (NICAS) sessions at a club, the nested session planning model helps to see where each session fits into the big picture, and how coaches of all levels work together.



Appendix 2 – Coaching assessment

The training courses bring together several strands of a climber's and coach's development: the technical understanding of how to climb, the ability to deliver and supervise appropriate sessions and an understanding of how to coach real people – with all their individual nuances and differences. The aim of the assessments is to holistically evaluate the performance of a coach to be able to take care of all these aspects, and brings all the above strands together.

As with any selection process, thorough preparation is the key to maximising the outcome of your assessment. The old adage of 'failing to prepare is preparing to fail' is certainly true so make sure that you have carefully planned out your session and your objectives, and given some thought to what to do should things not go quite as planned. The more prepared you are the more confident you will feel, and this will make a huge difference to those last-minute nerves.

Your assessment will be conducted by a Mountain Training UK & Ireland approved assessor, whose role is simply to ensure that you are operating at a standard of best practice for coaching.

To better help you prepare for your assessment we have summarised some key points that might be worth thinking about in the lead up to the big day.

- Get off to a good start by making a solid first impression – setting the tone for an assessment can often be a great way of shaking off some early nerves. Start as you mean to go on by being solid and confident in your role as you begin. This can happen even before your session observation starts.
- Be confident – at the point of assessment you will already be an experienced coach. Therefore try to think of your assessment as nothing more than running a session as you normally would. You wouldn't be shy about leading a session at your local centre, so why be shy here? Command your role confidently and you will certainly impress the assessor.
- Communicate well and clearly – make sure that you speak clearly and at a good volume. This will not only put across your excellent coaching tips to everyone in the room but also ensure that everything is clearly understood. This will reduce the likelihood of someone in your session getting the wrong end of the stick. Communication also includes listening so make sure you have time to ask questions of the group and the assessor to ensure that everything is on the right track.
- Don't rush things, take your time! – the assessor will be looking at a snapshot of your coaching skills and therefore is not looking to see you plough through an entire



week's information in 30–45 minutes. It is much better to deliver one or two of your objectives to a high standard than aim for six and lose the quality by rushing through your session.

- Be yourself and not someone you think the assessor wants to see – this will only make you feel more nervous and uncomfortable. We want you to be the best coach you can be on the day, but it's certainly you we are looking for.
- Don't expect everything to go smoothly – you can bet your bottom dollar that on assessment day something will go wrong. Whether it is a tiny issue or something larger, things very rarely go to plan, especially when you are relying on other people's cooperation. Therefore don't worry if things don't go as expected. Try to have a few 'get out of jail' games or activities up your sleeve so if the worst hits you can always fall back on something you know will work well.
- Use notes if needs be – the assessor will be aware that you might be nervous so don't feel that you cannot make any supporting notes to help jog your memory. Flash cards with key coaching points are ideal and can easily be put back in your pocket after you have used them.
- Do your homework – read the syllabus and guidance notes thoroughly and make notes on key points. This is what the assessor will be using during your assessment so in a way it's like us letting you see the exam questions before you take them.

Following the assessment the assessor will provide you with detailed feedback on your performance. This is your time to relax as the stressful part is over and this is the time to discuss your session. Use this time wisely to reflect on what aspects went well and what areas you might want to work on in the future. This is also a great opportunity ask any questions you might have and seek advice if you wish.

In some cases the assessor may wish for you to expand on points they saw during your session. Be prepared for this: be sure to have firmly memorised your session aims so you can link back to them if need be.

In the event that you are deferred, your course director will ensure an effective action plan is created giving you a framework to help you bring those weaker areas up to a high standard. Please be aware that there are no 'part re-assessments' in this qualification and it will be essential to repeat the whole process.



Appendix 3 - Additional information for Foundation Coaches

DLOG entries for Foundation Coaches

Candidates should record a variety of coaching sessions in DLOG remembering that quality is as important as quantity. For example, entering a regular NICAS session using the 'weekly' frequency option will reflect volume, but there is limited value in identical entries, so some of them should be edited to add specific details from the session.

A minimum of 15 logged coaching sessions since completing Foundation Coach training is expected, and may include roped climbing as well as bouldering both indoors and outdoors. These sessions should focus on delivery of the FUNdamental climbing techniques.

Reflective comments must be added for at least five entries in the 'description' box. These comments should go beyond simply what was done to include an evaluation of the success of a session measured against the aims, as well as ideas about progressions for the climbers, improvements in delivery, and what was learned as a coach.

Used in this way DLOG can become a diary of coaching development and a valuable mechanism through which providers and other experienced coaches can give feedback. Tick the 'flagged' box to draw attention to the most relevant entries.

Assessments

Foundation Coach assessment courses consist of a thorough review of your logged coaching experience and an evaluation of a number of prepared lesson plans, followed by an assessment of a practical coaching session that focuses on one of the FUNdamental climbing techniques.

You must share your digital logbook (DLOG) with the assessor prior to booking onto a course. If it does not demonstrate appropriate coaching experience and/or lesson plans that meet the required standard, you will not be able to proceed to the practical assessment. For this reason, providers are not able to take last minute assessment bookings.

A typical practical assessment with approximate timings will include:

- Assessor-candidate briefing (15mins)



- Candidate meet with climbers to be coached (15mins)
- Candidate run warm-up, coaching session, cool-down and wrap-up/review (60mins)
- Assessor-candidate debrief and delivery of result (30mins)

The provider will arrange for a small group of climbers (min. 3, max. 6) to be coached during the practical assessment, or may ask you to arrange this. This may be a group that you are currently coaching, or one that has been brought together for the assessment. Either way, a coaching session based on a FUNdamental climbing technique will be required, which is why novice climbers will be more appropriate than advanced climbers.

What to coach at Foundation Coach assessment

The content of the FUNdamentals of Climbing 1 movement workshop provides the basis of 'what to coach' at Foundation Coach level.

The core topics are:

- Weight transfer
- Handholds
- Footholds

As a minimum, Foundation Coach candidates should be confident in running effective and engaging coaching sessions on all of the topics above. Candidates who wish to select a different topic or technique to coach, should discuss this with the provider in advance of the practical assessment.

Lesson plans for Foundation Coaches

There are many coaching session lesson plan templates available and candidates should experiment with various formats to develop their own preferred style. As a minimum it should include; topic/technique, aims/learning outcomes, lesson structure with timings, venue and climber information and reflective observations (see above). For Foundation Coach assessment, lesson plan topics should focus on FUNdamental climbing techniques. The provider will make it clear how many are required, and they should be uploaded as files in DLOG.



Our association is a membership organisation that can help you as you work towards one of our qualifications.

As a membership association we are building a community of confident and expert leaders, instructors and coaches, that we hope you will join.

We can help you with:

- Big savings on clothing and equipment
- A wide range of accredited development workshops, events and opportunities for continuing personal/professional development
- Specialist mentoring for your qualification
- Regional networks and opportunities to build connections with others in the sector
- The Professional Mountaineer magazine offering advice, tips and guidance from experts and peers within the profession
- Specially negotiated rates for liability insurance for qualified members

Anyone can join from the moment they register for a Mountain Training qualification, and can join anytime when working towards a qualification or when qualified.

Join via your account on the Mountain Training Candidate Management System (Tahdah – CMS).

“The workshops I’ve done have been brilliant and have definitely made me a better leader” Alex, Association member.

“The Association offers an excellent range of CPD, which has given me a broader understanding of the role, skills and expertise required to be a great leader. Definitely recommend.” Charlie, Association member.