ACIA – SPG – Single Pitch Guide - Syllabus

Scope – A qualified Single Pitch Guide can guide, teach and supervise all aspects of rock climbing and abseil activities at single pitch crags, including guiding clients on single pitch trad routes. In doing so a Single Pitch Guide always maintains a high level of control over clients (clients do not operate independently or lead climb)

The venues used must allow clients to be safely lowered to the bottom of the crag at all times, and the guide to safely access the top and bottom of the crag.

Qualification structure - the structure to progress through the qualification is as below,

- Prerequisite personal experience
- Training course attendance - 4 days
- Consolidation period
- Assessment course – 2 days

Prerequisite personal experience

- Actively involved in rock climbing, and competent at trad lead climbing. Logged at least ten days personal experience with trad lead climbing.

Training course attendance

- Attendance on training course, 4-day practical training course delivered by ACIA ITA's through an ACIA approved provider. (or exemption from training granted)
- Max training course ratio (Days 1 &2 – 6 to 1), (Days 3 &4 – 3 to 1)) – Participants to ITA'S

Consolidation period

- Logged experience showing at least five days guiding / supervising (assisting / co- delivering) Top Rope climbing and abseil activities.
- Logged experience, Minimum - logged 40 routes of lead climbing in variety of areas putting "guiding" principles into practice.
- This mandatory logged experience is considered the minimum to enable prospective guides to develop the skills, knowledge and abilities, with candidates looking toward assessment ideally surpassing this

Assessment course

- Successful completion of the 2-day practical assessment course – competence with all aspects of the syllabus and all prerequisites is required.
- Successful completion of theory tasks (written assignment / knowledge test)
- Current first aid qualification
- Max Assessment course ratio (Day 1 – 3 to 1), (Day 2 – 2 to 1) – Participants to ITA's

Syllabus

Technical Competence

- **Equipment** – Demonstrate appropriate use, care, and maintenance of a range of commonly used climbing equipment. Including an understanding of manufacturers recommendations and good practice. Understand the advantages and disadvantages of different options of harnesses, helmets, belay devices, ropes, slings, karabiners, trad gear (nuts, hexes, cams) etc.
- **Anchors and systems** – Demonstrate an ability and understanding of evaluating in-situ anchors (bolt, bollards, natural features etc), and an ability to place and evaluate trad protection (nut, hexes, cams), be able to select, place and use appropriate solid anchors to construct systems appropriate for group use.
  Use equipment and selected anchors to create belay systems (top rope bottom belayed, top rope top belayed, group/ novice abseil) that are beyond doubt and are designed to maximise the safety of all (participants and guides) when in use and whilst constructing.
- **Belaying skills** – Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding and ability to use belay devices (manual and assisted braking) and systems, including the ability to perform checks and use appropriate communication, belay efficiently, lower safely and smoothly, hold falls.
- **Personal climbing skills and knowledge** – Lead climb trad routes (to at least Grade 12) in a manner that is competent, assured and demonstrates technique, shows a clear understanding of good practice, and knowledge around the overall safety chain involved in climbing (route selection / decision making, closing systems, situational awareness).
  Be able to lead climb routes (trad or bolted) in order to set up top anchors and systems.
- **Abseiling skills** – Show an understanding of, and ability to use self-protected abseil systems, and retrievable abseil systems
- **Background knowledge** – demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the development of climbing, its ethics, and current trends / directions

Guidance notes –
Competence and experience are essential if you are to guide and supervise others, the foundation to do this is within your own knowledge, understanding and ability. It is important that you are both familiar and capable with a range of equipment and techniques, and that you can choose appropriate equipment and systems for different contexts and situations.
As a climbing guide you will be a role model to others, it is there for important to provide good examples of systematic approaches that will prevent error and always maximise safety, the prerequisite and experience requirements for the course exist to ensure you can develop the required judgement, they should be considered minimums, with candidates ideally surpassing them.

Group Management and decision making

- **Planning and preparing sessions** – Prepare a "session plan" for the session. The "session plan" should address appropriate activities and progressions to meet the aims and objectives of the group, whilst retaining the ability to respond to client / situational needs. Show an awareness and understanding around "safety management plans" who is responsible for these and their content (identify the risks of the planned activities, control measures and specific safety / emergency procedures etc)
- **Managing the participants and group** – Provide appropriate and effective briefings, coaching and supervision to facilitate a safe productive session. Ensure the level of supervision provided is appropriate to allow you to maintain a high level of control (especially essential whilst clients are belaying). This may include adapting session plans to meet participants displayed ability levels
- **Decision making and using effective safety management techniques** – demonstrate the ability to dynamically risk assess and make good decisions on route / site selection and hazards (route direction, friable / loose rock, belayer competence, edge risks etc). Use techniques appropriate to the context to manage risks during peer belaying. Ensure effective communication systems and safe practices are maintained.
  Use all group systems (top rope bottom belayed, top rope top belayed, group/ novice abseil) and "guide" clients up trad routes, whilst applying effective safety management processes to ensure they work efficiently and safely.

Guidance notes –
Climbing and abseiling activities have inherent risk, as a guide we have a duty to make decisions to keep ourselves and clients safe throughout the activity, because of this it is very important that we maintain a high level of control over the situation, and continually / dynamically risk assess to ensure we apply appropriate safety systems and back-ups at all times. The rate at which any individual will progress will differ, having a full range of activities and progressions will allow you to continue to assist them in developing specific skills in a safe manner.
Judgement and decision making around hazards, risks and control measures is essential to operating as a climbing guide, as a guide delivering practical sessions we should be dynamically risk assessing and making decisions to ensure safety, this should be done within the framework of a structured safety management system (at an overall organisational level), the safety management system we are operating within, and aims / objectives of the session should inform and influence the activities and progressions that we choose to include in our session plan.
Supervising novice belayers and climbers is commonly done, but the complexity of it is often underestimated, it must be assumed that novices will make mistakes, so the back-up systems chosen (styles of belay devices, back up belay systems, attachments etc.) and the methods of supervision must match the level of competence.
Ultimately as the climbing guide you are responsible for the safety of the group and its members, and you must be certain that you have situational control and back-up systems in place to prevent serious injury or negative outcomes.

Instructional and teaching skills

- **Knowledge and demonstration of techniques** – Provide appropriate levels of knowledge for the task and clear concise demonstrations that give clients good visual images to learn from
- **Gradual build up processes, progressions, and activities** – Utilise a gradual build up process, with a logical sequence of progressions and activities, to ensure the development and consolidation of required knowledge, skills, and experience.
- **Adapt instructional style and approach to meet individual needs** – Use instructional and teaching strategies that work for the individuals you are with, make changes to the session plan based on the observable progression of the group and individuals
- **Observe and provide constructive feedback to help clients improve performance** – Observe performance and identify the areas that most need improvement, provide constructive feedback and coaching to help clients improve their ability.
- **Specific skills and techniques** – show a clear ability to teach participants to,
    1. Correctly fit Harnesses, helmets and prepare themselves for climbing activities
    2. Safely and efficiently belay climbers, including safe back up belay systems
    3. Tie into the climbing rope
    4. Use effective buddy checks and good communication whilst climbing and descending
    5. Climb with technique to improve ability and move safely in outdoor climbing environments
    6. Abseil in a safe and controlled manner with appropriate back-up systems
    7. Safely belay you as the "guide" whilst you lead them up trad routes
    8. Safely follow the route as the "second" and effectively remove placed protection

Guidance notes –
Our role as a climbing guide is to provide opportunities and help clients experience climbing and progress their ability and knowledge, to achieve this, you will require a range of abilities beyond your own climbing competence, your ability to communicate, inspire, and provide positive instruction will be essential in supporting their experience.
The ability to use simple instructional strategies and models (Demo, explanation, practice, correction) will be required, gaining understanding through questioning, observation, and providing feedback are skills that are outside of normal climbing that you will need to develop and refine to allow you to best meet the needs of those you work with.

Problem solving and dealing with the unusual / unexpected

- **Assisting from below** – Be able to intervene to solve problems, allowing you to assist climbers or belayers whilst positioned at the bottom of the crag, this includes being able to take over belay systems whilst in use, being able to ascend to a climber and assist.
- **Assisting from above** – Be able to intervene and solve problems, allowing you to assist whilst positioned at the top of the crag, this includes being able to descend to a climber and assist.
- **Lowering** – Be able to lower climbers (or abseilers) directly to the ground if required, understanding how the belay systems you choose affect this and choosing appropriate systems for the context.
- **Hoisting** – Be able to raise a climber (or abseiler) a short distance to solve issues, understanding simple assisted and unassisted hoists and how the chosen belay system may affect these.
- **Rope mobility** – Be able to Prusik up a rope, changeover to descent, bypass knots / obstructions, use self-protected abseil systems
- **Back-ups** – Implementation of back-up systems whilst problem solving to ensure that hazards and risk are not increased in an unacceptable manner.

Guidance notes –
The systems and supervision that we implement whilst delivering Single Pitch climbing sessions should pre-empt and prevent the vast majority of issues, or they should allow a very easy and controlled solution.
Having the ability to solve issues that are unexpected or unusual is also important, the environment that we operate in (single pitch crags) has relatively limited variables, which allows for the specific systems and processes practiced to be able to solve even the unusual circumstances that could occur.
Ensuring problem solving skills are well practiced and smooth is important to ensure that we are prepared if they are ever required.

The climbing environment

- **Access** – Understand access rules and requirements, role model positive approaches to crag access and use
- **Conservation** – Understand the natural environments that you are in, role model "leave no trace principles" and manage your group to minimise impact
- **Etiquette and ethics** – understand climbing etiquette and ethics broadly and specifically (for the local crags), role model positive approaches on all occasions

Guidance notes –
Climbing outdoors involves being in natural outdoor environments, because of this there will always be conflicting interests in relation to access, conservation, and ethics. It is important that as guides we both understand these issues (from both sides) and role model responsible approaches to these issues.
Involvement with state based climbing organisations and national organisations will help in maintaining an awareness of current issues or thought processes.