

**British Caving Association’s
Qualification Matrix for
Caving and Mine Exploration qualifications for led activity sessions**

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1. **Qualification Management Committee (QMC) – about us:** As the Awarding body network for Caving and Mine Exploration we operate as administration, management and quality assurance of the award scheme for the national governing body – the BCA (British Caving Association).
2. **Health and safety legislation;** The UK’s ‘Health and Safety at Work Act 1974’ and the Republic of Ireland’s ‘Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005’ are the primary pieces of legislation covering occupational health and safety of staff and volunteers.
3. **What caving and mining activities are regulated?** Most Caving and Mine Exploration activities are not regulated. Some defined adventure activities provided commercially to young people in England, Scotland and Wales are regulated by the (UK) Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations (AALR). While this does not apply to adults, clubs, education, the Crown and a number of our activities it provides a clear benchmark for safety management within adventure activities. The regulations (AALR) make only one reference to qualifications, which is that *“as a condition of every licence, licence holders shall maintain suitable and sufficient arrangements for the appointment of a sufficient number of competent and adequately qualified instructors (Reg 9(1)(b)(i))”*. It is worth noting that the dictionary definition of being qualified is having the standard of skill, knowledge, or ability that is necessary for doing or being something; it does not say that someone must possess a qualification. The legislation also does not specify what any qualifications could/should be. The non-statutory accreditation schemes take a very similar approach to demonstrating competence.
4. **Ways of demonstrating competence.** QMC has adopted the HSE approach which recognises the principle of four ways to demonstrate competence, namely.
 - a. qualification,
 - b. equivalent qualification
 - c. in-house accreditation
 - d. competence through experience

Our matrices below provide the qualification benchmark that, where appropriate, might then be used by an employer/deployer to consider any equivalence, in house training and assessment solution or other form of experience. It is important to stress that qualification is the favoured option of many organisations; relying on QMC to do the work of setting and maintaining appropriate standards.

5. **The value of qualifications:** BCA qualifications provide valuable, national benchmarks; the QMC has compiled the matrices below in order to match a specific activity to its relevant qualification(s), identifying the minimum qualification that someone might hold to lead an activity session (the instructor or leader) as well as the minimum qualification that might support overall safety management and other technical matters (the ‘technical advisor’ or ‘competent person’ role), subject to the individual meeting several other personal attributes defined by the employer.
6. The definition of a led activity session is where the participants require a formal level of instruction, supervision and support throughout the activity.

7. **What further training is available?** Qualifying as an instructor or leader must be seen as a stage in any individual's experience, be they a volunteer or professional, but far from the endpoint. Expanding their experience of working environments and participants while also maintaining their existing skills and knowledge and adding more is an ongoing process. As well as gaining leadership and instructional experience, there are many opportunities for continuing development within their roles, through on-the-job training, assessment and experience and within many institutions. 'Bolt on' courses available – The Tyrolean Module, Deep Water in Caves, Radon Training etc. We recognise that there will be other groupings within various institutions (examples might include voluntary or military groups etc.) so again it will be for employers to judge how well-connected instructors and technical advisers are to their peers.
- To ensure currency QMC requires all CL and VCL qualified instructors to attend an 'Update' day once every five years. This is run by a Trainer/Assessor and includes a check of logbooks.
- CIC qualified instructors attend an 'Update' every three years.
- Trainer/Assessors attend a CPD Workshop additional to the above every three years run by peers.
8. **Developing a person specification for instructors and advisers:** Anyone using a leader, instructor or coach will want them to fit into their organisation and that means developing a person specification alongside a qualification. Competence for a particular job or role also includes a range of other factors including:
- a. **Skills:** These may include problem solving, teamwork and collaboration, oral and written communications skills and leadership.
 - b. **Knowledge;** Theoretical and practical familiarity, awareness and understanding of the specific role of leader or instructor.
 - c. **Attitude:** Personal attributes and behavioural/character traits that align with your club, organization, centre or wall such as self-awareness, resilience, professionalism and a strong work ethic and the ability to remain calm in a crisis. More specifically being customer/member focused, having common sense/being pragmatic, being positive (a "can do" approach), a problem solver with an ability to analyse problems from first principles, being inclusive may all be valuable traits.
 - d. **Training:** Qualifications confirm that skills and knowledge were demonstrated on a specified date, whereas ongoing support and/or membership of a relevant association will maintain and enhance that base standard. Training may include core 'instructor' training at a specific level, further training such as to how to work with harder to reach groups and additional training such as might prove useful for the role of technical adviser
 - e. **Experience:** Both general & context specific experience may be necessary for a particular client group and broader experience may be necessary for someone to provide safety advice. this can be
 - i. Directly relevant, context specific, experience of the activity, such as abseiling and ladder climbing,

- ii. Indirect experience in parallel activities such as deep water caves, ghyll scrambling etc.
- iii. Transferable experience from comparable activities such as within mountaineering, paddlesports etc.
- iv. The quantity of experience required to gain a qualification is well described and can be measured in years as well as in the number of days. Any employer will then need to consider how much context specific experience an instructor should gather year on year after they've qualified. The breadth and depth of a technical adviser's experience may both need to be significantly greater. An employer must decide on the value of breadth as well as the depth of experience of a specific activity.

9. **Advice and Expertise:** In some situations, those with responsibility for activity delivery may lack the technical expertise and experience to make decisions about staff competence, safety management systems and supervision. In such cases, those responsible may choose to rely upon a what is variously known as a technical advisor, a competent person, a technical expert, subject matter expert etc. In the matrices below are recommendations for qualifications skills, experience and qualifications that may be relevant when selecting appropriate technical advisors. There are the communities of practice that several associations offer, the interactions with the expert inspectors of the various accreditation.

10. **Activity Matrices;** Where appropriate the name of the relevant previous qualification is shown in brackets – holders of these historic qualifications were automatically issued with the equivalent new qualifications by the BCA when they were launched.

A - Caving – Natural caves

Activity	Instructor		Technical Advisor	
	Person Specification to include	Qualification	Person Specification to include	Qualification
Caving with no pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, both general & context specific 	Cave Leader (Previously Level 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific 	Cave Instructor Certificate
Caving with pitches up to 18 metres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, both general & context specific 	Vertical Cave Leader (Previously Level 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific 	Cave Instructor Certificate
Caving with pitches over 18 metres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, both general & context specific 	Cave Instructor Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific 	Cave Instructor Certificate

B – Mine Exploration

Activity	Instructor Qualifications		Technical Advisor	
	Person specification to include	Qualification	Person specification to include	Qualification
Mine Exploration with no pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, both general & context specific 	Mine Leader (Previously Level 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific 	Cave Instructor Certificate (with Mines Module or Mine Leader for the region)
Mine Exploration with pitches up to 18 metres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, both general & context specific 	Vertical Mine Leader (Previously Level 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills & knowledge • Personal Attributes • Training support/membership • Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific 	Cave Instructor Certificate (with Mines Module or Mine Leader for the region)
Mine Exploration with pitches over 18 metres	Skills & knowledge Personal Attributes Training support/membership Experience, both general & context specific	Cave Instructor Certificate (with Mines Module)	Skills & knowledge Personal Attributes Training support/membership Experience, relevance, breadth & depth of general & context specific	Cave Instructor Certificate (with Mines Module or Mine Leader for the region)