

British Caving Association

How to book onto a course

Register with scheme

All candidates wishing to book onto a training or assessment course must be registered with the LCMLA & CIC award scheme. Candidates need only register once, for which there is a one-off fee for both the Local Cave and Mine Leader Award and Cave Instructor Certificate schemes. To register;

- Click here: <https://britishcaving.azolve.com/> and sign up
- Click on "Membership" and purchase LCMLA/CIC Scheme Membership
- A video which walks candidates through the sign-up process available here: <https://youtu.be/jo9IuUmx5FY>

Register for a course

Courses are delivered by Trainer/Assessors following the award scheme syllabus. Trainer/Assessors must register all courses with the Qualification Management System (QMS), however in some cases may choose not to advertise the course publicly on the system.

Candidates can only book onto a course if the pre-requisites are met.

Book onto a course through the Qualification Management System

- Log onto the QMS: <https://britishcaving.azolve.com/>
- Find a course
 - Click on Events & Courses
 - Select course type then region
 - Select a course
 - Click "Add to cart" (note in most cases candidates are unable to book onto a course if they do not meet the pre-requisites)
 - **Follow the payment method, even though the payment will be zero, and complete the order**

Book onto a course direct with a Trainer/Assessor

If booking directly with a Trainer/Assessor, or for courses not advertised on the system, candidates will need to provide the following details (in the same format registered with the QMS) to the Trainer/Assessor so that they can add candidates to the course:

- First Name
- Last Name
- Membership Number (note this starts with ME)
- Date of Birth

In both cases, once booked onto a course the Trainer/Assessor will contact candidates with joining instructions, booking conditions and invoicing details.

Please be aware that Trainer/Assessors may remove candidates from a course if the Trainer/Assessors bookings terms and conditions are not met.

Vertical Cave and/or Mine Leader Core Skills Assessment

An underground assessment of a candidate's skills, equipment and competence in the rigging and management of simple vertical pitches (maximum of 18m in length) including problem prevention and solving.

Pre-requisites

Candidates must have attended a Vertical Leader Training Course (or in exceptional circumstances have been granted exemption from training) prior to attending this course.

Prior to presenting for assessment candidates must evidence that they have sufficient personal experience in a variety of caves and/or mines. As a guide, the minimum experience expected is:

- At least 30 vertical trips in including **5 quality trips**.
- A proportion of these should be as a leader under supervision.
- Some trips may be above and beyond the remit of the award

A **quality trip** should satisfy at least 4 of the following criteria: -

- Exploration of a new route or mine/cave (new to the candidate that is),
- Incorporates at least 4 to 5 hours of underground exploration.
- An experience that develops an individual's caving and mining knowledge, skills and awareness.
- Incorporates caving/mining exploration skills above the level of the candidate's qualification.
- Of the candidate's own making i.e. the candidate is to lead the trip, or it is one done with peers and not led by an external source.
- Involves the application of vertical skills, digging or exploration.
- Exploration of caves with a streamway that responds to rainfall.

Candidates are to nominate 5 logged trips as quality days and justify this selection to the Trainer/Assessor using the above criteria.

Course Overview

This one-day practical assessment may be taken alongside another candidate with a trainer/assessor from any region unless combining this assessment with SRT for leader and/or Tyrolean assessments.

The assessment must be conducted by a different Trainer/Assessor from the one who delivered the training for this module.

The first part of the assessment is theoretical and is normally based upon a written response to a question paper. The paper is completed in the candidate's own time and is unsupervised. If desired, a candidate may opt to cover this work orally, though this will increase the duration of the assessment.

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The second part of the assessment is a practical assessment at an appropriate location underground. Scenario-based questioning is sometimes used by assessors in areas such as dealing with emergency situations but will not be used extensively to assess leadership skills. Trainer/ Assessors must ensure that it is made clear to candidates when scenario-based questioning is to take place. Where a candidate is deferred they must in general return to the original Trainer/Assessor – but can opt to do a complete reassessment with any Trainer/Assessor except the Trainer/Assessor that delivered training. If a candidate 'fails' they may choose any Trainer/Assessor for reassessment except the Trainer/Assessor that delivered training. Safety issues which require the candidate to go underground again will be an automatic fail. The Trainer/Assessor has the right to terminate the assessment if the candidate is not up to the required standard in fundamental areas of the syllabus relating to safety or conservation.

Resource Links

- [Vertical Leader: Ropework](#)

Syllabus

The full checklist used by Trainer/Assessors which forms the syllabus for this award is provided below. Candidates should ensure they are familiar with all aspects of the checklist prior to booking an assessment.

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Vertical Cave and/or Mine Leader

Vertical equipment

Leader's personal equipment – suitability / care
Choice and suitability of equipment for group members' use – harness / cowstails / descender etc
Knowledge of ppe regulations and equipment standards
Ropes – types / construction / longevity / usage / storage / care etc
Karabiner / maillons – types / usage / limitations etc
Ladders / spreaders / tethers – types / construction / linkage / limitations / coiling / storage etc
Descenders / ascenders / pulleys / belay devices etc – types / usage / limitations
Bolt hangers – types / usage / limitations

Knots

Use of an appropriate range of knots
Knowledge of suitability / limitations

Rigging

Equipment preparation / packing
Rigger protection – methods and their advantages / limitations
Natural anchors – suitability and use
Artificial anchors – pre-use checks
Knowledge of fall factors
Traverse lines
Belay systems – construction using rope / slings – alignment and forces – sharing loads
Pitch head – approach / ease of access / position of leader etc
Ladders – use of spreaders etc. / deployment etc
Group abseil rope
Lifeline – incl. Double lifelining

Lifelining methods

Belay methods and devices – use and limitations
Position of leader
Safety of group members – waiting / to & from pitch head
Efficiency / fluidity of lifeline technique
Double lifelining
Communication

Descent / ascent

Group ladder climbing- pros and cons / hazards / style
Group abseiling – pros and cons / hazards
Lowering – pros and cons / hazards
Leader personal safety – ladder / abseil

Emergency vertical techniques

Improvised harness – rope only / slings & krabs
Use & limitations of waist belay
Chosen belay method or device – ability to lock off / ability to lower off / ability to convert to hoist etc
Ladder problems and solutions
Abseil problems and solutions
Lowering problems and solutions
Traverse problems and solutions
Assistance to exhausted ladder climber
Hoist of exhausted / injured group member – with assistance / without assistance
Conversion of hoist to lower

Your next steps

Following successful completion of the assessment the next stage is the Vertical Leader Group day assessment. The group day assessment must take place in the region which the candidate wishes to work, and may not be assessed by the Trainer/Assessor who assessed the Core Skills stage.

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Candidates who have not completed their Cave and/or Mine Leader may apply to a Trainer/Assessor to combine their Group Day assessment to include suitable vertical elements as well as address the syllabus of the Cave and/or Mine Leader Group Day assessment.

Note that the Vertical Award provides a candidate the qualification to lead groups on vertical pitches (and technical traverses) within the sites listed on their Cave and/or Mine Leader Award certificate. Candidates may choose to add sites to their qualification during the Group Day Assessment.