



# Guide for Candidates for the British Association of International Mountain Leaders

International Mountain Leader



Training & Assessment Scheme

British Association of International Mountain Leaders

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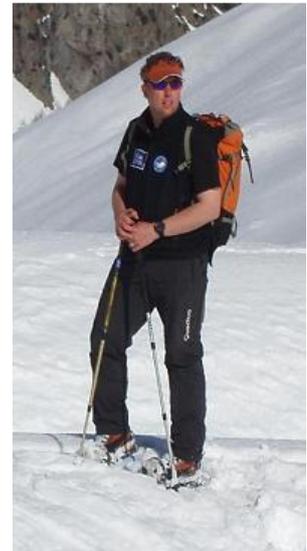
## Welcome to the Guide for Candidates

Welcome to this first edition of the Guide to Candidates considering, or undertaking, training or assessment, to become an International Mountain Leader (IML). In conjunction with the IML Handbook, produced by Mountain Leader Training UK, this Guide to Candidates is designed to give a flavour of the type of work that an IML may undertake, and what the training and assessment process involves. As you will discover from reading this guide, the IML award is held by a wide variety of people, from those who use the award for full time guiding work, through to teachers who use it for school trips and in the holidays and those who aspired to the award as the highest possible measure of their ability with regard to for leading groups in the mountains around the world. The IML award is unique in its membership, and this reflects the possibilities that the award offers all those who attain it. We hope this Guide to Candidates inspires you to work towards the award!

**Best wishes from the British Association of International Mountain Leaders**

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Dear All,

I am really proud to have been asked by my colleagues in BAIML to write this short introduction to life as an international mountain leader. In my capacity as chairman of the UIAA Training Standards working group I regularly meet representatives of mountain training organisations from all around the world who are struggling to find cross-border recognition for their mountaineering qualifications.

The International Mountain Leader award is one of the very few qualifications that has achieved this “Holy Grail” in mountaineering, and BAIML has long taken a leading role in developing co-operation and maintaining professional standards: no wonder that UIMLA regularly receives requests for membership from new nations!

Within this guide you will find all the information you require about training to become an International Mountain Leader and of course, if you would like to ask further questions you are always welcome to telephone the office at Mountain Leader Training UK (01690 720272) during normal office hours.

From my very first visit to the Lake District I found a freedom and a confidence in the mountains that I lacked in any other environment, and I have been privileged to make a career out of communicating that passion by leading groups safely through the hills. I have witnessed magnificent sunrises, sunsets and storms, made lifelong friends, and built unforgettable memories along the way.

I can't afford to retire early, but am rich beyond measure! At first the role of leadership involved simply being more experienced than the rest of the group, but over the years this developed to gradually build an awareness of the huge range of empathies, skills and responsibilities that are required of any leader working with groups overseas, whether on a professional or voluntary basis.

A true leader needs to be confident of operating on technically more challenging ground than the proposed itinerary, but just as crucially has to have a clear understanding of many organisational factors that are required for any expedition. Travel arrangements, cultural and legal requirements, insurance, logistical and financial planning all need to be carefully considered - and contingency plans prepared to pre-empt the inevitable gremlins.

An international mountain leader will often be required to negotiate accommodation and travel arrangements in an unfamiliar language, and like any good professional should take effective steps to deal with the problem if language barriers regularly present a problem.

Having successfully managed to help your party reach the hills and navigate successfully through them, another role becomes apparent: to entertain, educate and enthuse! The roles of raconteur, naturalist, and cultural guide are added to the list.

The International Mountain Leader scheme sets and achieves high standards. It provides training and advice about consolidation, leading to independent assessment in all these skills and competencies; and it is therefore the recommended formal qualification for anybody who leads parties walking in the hills outside the UK. BAIML is the professional association and fraternity for the people who use this award, and its committee works tirelessly to promote the qualification, liaise with other mountain professionals such as the IFMGA, maintain professional standards, provide ongoing development training (“CPD”) and pool marketing resources. Welcome to the world of the International Mountain Leader!

Steve Long, Chairman of UK Mountain Leader Training & Chair of the UIAA Training Standards Working Group



The Union of International Mountain Leader Associations (UIMLA), was founded in 2004. The current President (2008) of UIMLA is Paul Cammack a member of the British Association of International Mountain Leaders. The BAIML representatives are currently Paul Donovan and Bill Bailey. It was decided at the meeting in 2004 that all IMLs would be awarded the same carnet and badge giving an internationally recognised identity. It also paves the way for other countries from around the world to join UIMLA setting a world standard for mountain leaders.

## The principal aims of UIMLA are:

- To promote the profession of International Mountain Leader (IML) and to reinforce its identity beyond Europe;
- To develop relationships between the professionals of various nationalities and to take part in the evolution of the IML training and qualifications;
- To represent the profession at a European and international level

UIMLA's International Office is at UIMLA, Maison des Parcs et de la Montagne, 256 Rue de la République, F-73000 CHAMBERY, France. You can find more details of UIMLA and the other national associations at [www.uimla.org](http://www.uimla.org).

The following countries are members of the Union of International Mountain Leader Associations:

Andorra	L'Associació de Guies i Acompanyants de Muntanya d'Andorra	<a href="http://www.agamandorra.com">www.agamandorra.com</a>
Belgium	Union Professionnelle des Métiers de la Montagne (UPMM)	<a href="http://www.upmm.be">www.upmm.be</a>
France	Syndicat National des Accompagnateurs en Montagne (LESAEM)	<a href="http://www.lesaem.org">www.lesaem.org</a>
Italy	Italian International Mountain Leader Association	Website under construction
Poland	Stowarzyszenie Europejskich Przewodników Górskich „ (SEPG)	<a href="http://www.przewodnik-lider.pl">www.przewodnik-lider.pl</a>
Spain	Asociación Española de Guías de Montaña (AEGM)	<a href="http://www.aegm.org">www.aegm.org</a>
Switzerland	Association Suisse des Accompagnateurs en Montagne (ASAM)	<a href="http://www.randonnee.ch">www.randonnee.ch</a>
UK	British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML)	<a href="http://www.baiml.org">www.baiml.org</a>

## History of the International Mountain Leader

In 1993 the first British holders of the European Mountain Leader Award (EML) established the British Association of European Mountain Leaders (BAEML). A national association was required in order to fulfil responsibilities, including a code of conduct and insurance provision, to the Commission Européenne des Accompagnateurs en Montagne (CEAM). Only through membership of BAEML would British EML Award holders be validated to practise and have their qualification recognised within Europe. In 2003 the various member countries of CEAM decided that for the award to gain greater unity and universal recognition it should have a more unified carnet, badge and identity. It was decided that a change of title from *European* to *International* would remove the barrier for non-European countries to join and also reflect the increasing number of award holders leading treks in the Greater Ranges. In 2004 at Plas y Brenin, The National Mountain Centre, CEAM changed its title to the 'Union of International Mountain Leader Associations' (UIMLA) and accepted a new constitution which included the adoption of a universal award name, carnet and badge. These changes were ratified at a ceremony held in Chambéry, France on Saturday 27 November 2004 and signed by the eight countries. Following the formation of UIMLA, each member country agreed consequently to change its name and constitution. In the UK this was done in 2005 by a change in title for the British award and association from European Mountain Leader Award (EML) to International Mountain Leader Award (IML) and from British Association of European Mountain Leaders (BAEML) to British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML).



Any member of BAIML can work internationally, but here are some examples of the work that British IMLs often lead within remit of the IML scheme. The table below shows the scope of work for within the UK, the Alps, and internationally.

## United Kingdom



In the UK there is a broad range of work that IMLs commonly undertake, from working on Mountain / Walking Group Leader training & assessment courses, to leading groups in the hills, teaching them navigation, or about the upland environment. In the winter months, the UK hills often require the use of crampons, which is outside the IML remit, but many IMLs operating in the UK are additionally qualified as Winter Mountain Leaders who may use crampons. The majority of UK Summer IML work is similar in remit to that of the Summer Mountain Leader award, but the IML is a professional qualification, and as such is much more sought after by employers. IMLs are also involved in D of E awards, the Scout Association, and many school and educational trips into the hills. Some IMLs work exclusively in the UK, and opted to get the award as a sign that they had achieved the top qualification for trekking activities.

## Europe & the Alps



For those IMLs working in the Alps, either full or part time, the qualification is often a legal requirement. In the Summer months, IMLs are often to be found on the famous trekking routes such as the GR20 or in the Pyrenees or the Alps. During Winter many IMLs, who are properly experienced, take groups snowshoeing through the snowy forests and middle mountains, on day walks, or with a night in a comfy mountain hut. In Europe there is great scope for a wide range of work for an IML, and some specialise in teaching themed days covering topics such as Alpine flora and fauna, navigation, avalanche awareness, or geology, to name but a few. The IML in Europe cannot guide groups on glaciers or areas of permanent snow cover, or on any ground where the techniques of Alpinism are required, but the rest of the hills and mountains are theirs to roam and to lead groups on throughout the year.

## International



You will find British IMLs in mountains all around the world, from the Everest Base Camp trek to Kilimanjaro. Many of the countries that these regions are in are not member countries of UIMLA (yet!) but the qualification is still valid if you are leading groups within remit. The classic trekking regions of the world are covered by the IML qualification as well as expeditions to remote areas of the world, including where the IML has suitable experience, rainforests, deserts and polar regions. As you can see from these three sections, an IML qualification is far reaching, but it needs to be backed up by relevant local experience / appropriate skills. The remit of where an International Mountain Leader can guide you is not limited geographically in any way, and for leading trekking and snowshoeing groups, it is the most suitable qualification in the world.





To give you a better idea of the type of career you could have as an IML, here we have profiled three BAIML members and outlined their range of work, the regions often visited, and the skills that they offer and use each day...

## **Kingsley Jones**

**Full time IML in the French Alps**



“That’s me on the right of the photo, leading a snowshoeing group on a day trek above Chamonix. I have lived in the French Alps for over ten years, and the IML is a legal requirement for trekking and snowshoe guiding. In the summer months the majority of clients come for one of the classic Alpine treks such as the Tour du Mont Blanc or Walkers Haute Route, as well as gems such as the Tour du Ruan or traverse of the Gran Paradiso Park. In winter I work every day on snowshoes for both day treks, and overnight stays in mountain huts. I also teach a lot of people about avalanche awareness in the mountains during the winter. The Summer Alpine season finishes in late September, and I usually lead a few trips further afield before the Winter starts. In recent years I have led trekking groups to Meru & Kilimanjaro, the Moroccan Atlas and to Aconcagua Park in the Argentinan Andes”.

## **Julia Tregaskis-Allen**

**Full time IML in the Swiss Alps**



“I have worked in outdoor education and on expeditions worldwide from Africa to the Himalaya. I’m passionate about a variety of sporting activities, regularly competing in running, triathlon and cross-country ski races. I previously worked as a Personal Trainer in London, so if you feel that improving personal fitness is a major part of your mountain holiday, then I am ideally qualified to give advice on how to reach your goal. This summer I ran the the Mont Blanc Marathon and the North Face Ultra Trail from Courmayeur to Chamonix, which involves running 96km with 5,600m of ascent in altitude, and came 7<sup>th</sup> overall in the womens race! I have also written and been delivering a new Nordic Walking Lowland Terrain Training Module for UK instructors. When not racing around the Alps, I lead groups trekking and snowshoeing in the Swiss and French Alps”.

## **Lindsay Cannon**

**Part time IML & BBC reporter**



“I’ve spent over twelve years exploring the Alps and have great enthusiasm for the mountain environment. I decided to work towards the IML award after discovering the pleasure of introducing other people to the alpine mountains. For me the aspects of the IML award which focus on the environment, the flora and fauna, the culture and traditions are especially important. It is always a joy to learn more about my ‘workplace’ and to share that information with others. I particularly enjoy the winter months when I take clients snowshoeing. Seeing faces ‘light up’ as people experience what may be their first mountain walk in a winter wonderland is truly wonderful. When not in the Alps I live in the Highlands of Scotland and report for BBC television and radio on a wide range of issues. At present I am working on The Adventure Show for BBC television”.

As you can see, the IML award is not an end in itself. It is what you make with it. That is the beauty and attraction of the award. The remit of what you can do as an IML should never be seen as restrictions, but as opportunities. What makes BAIML so strong is the wide experience and work backgrounds of our membership. There cannot be a county in the world, or a desert or mountain range that at least one of our members has not visited.



## Registration Requirements

All potential candidates must first register for the International Mountain Leader Scheme and satisfy the following conditions. You must:

- Complete the Mountain Leader Award (Summer)
- Have 20 summer international quality mountain days;
- Have 20 winter quality mountain days (UK/ overseas);
- Identify a suitable referee to endorse the registration application, preferably an IML, Guide, Mountain Instructor or ML Centre staff member, but other long term climbing/walking partner or suitable employer will be considered.

## What is a 'Quality International Mountain Day'?

A quality international summer mountain day should be a mountain day outside of the UK and Ireland and include more than half of the following criteria:

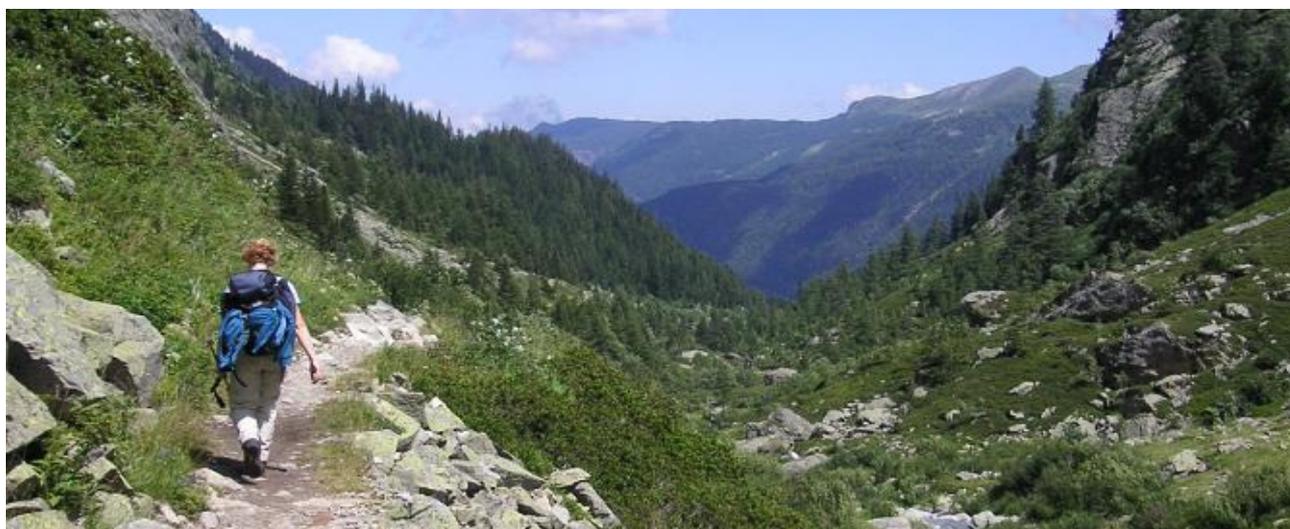
- In an environment below 3000m, the day should include a height gain of approximately 1000m;
- In an environment above 3000m the day should include a height gain of approximately 300m between each sleeping height;
- A journey of a minimum of six hours;
- Use of navigational skills including the use of a map, compass, altimeter or GPS;
- Decision-making about route choice and judgement of terrain;
- Planning involving the use of a weather forecast;

- Ascent and/or descent of steep broken ground;
- Negotiation of sections of fixed equipment and/or small sections of snow as part of a mountain journey;
- Appreciation of the environment and an increase in one's own environmental knowledge.

A quality winter mountain day in the UK should follow all the normal criteria for a quality winter day for the Mountain Leader (Winter) scheme.

A quality international winter mountain day should be a mountain day outside of the UK and Ireland and include more than half of the following criteria:

- Must involve movement and travel on snow;
- Must include ascent and/or descent;
- A journey of a minimum of five hours;
- Planning involving the use of weather and avalanche forecasts;
- Use of navigational skills including the use of a map, compass, altimeter, or GPS;
- Progress made in poor or worsening weather conditions;
- Decision-making about route choice and judgement of terrain;
- Evaluation of the snow pack and avalanche hazard throughout the day and on-going decision-making;
- Appreciation of the winter environment and an increase in one's own environmental knowledge.





### **The mountain environment**

The IML should have a broad working knowledge of the mountain environment including geology, natural history, fauna and flora. This knowledge should be used to inspire, enthuse and educate the group.

### **An overview of the legal and economic situation in countries in which IML award holders work**

An IML should understand and comply with the legal matters of regulation of activities, taxation, social security and public responsibilities. Leaders should have an awareness of both the economic environment and the marketing of hill-walking activities and the importance of these factors in promoting an international business.

### **Group management and leader responsibilities**

An IML should be capable of leading and enthusing a group in the mountain environment whilst considering and managing subjective and objective dangers. Also they should be able to develop and adapt suitable itineraries for a range of groups, and be able to lead, organise and control the group appropriately at all times.

### **Teaching**

An IML should be able to teach and educate groups in a variety of ways to pass on skills, knowledge and understanding, and to communicate in a coherent manner, as well as to demonstrate the teaching of basic skills which will help groups enjoy the mountains safely.

### **Anatomy and physiology**

An IML should have an understanding of anatomy and physiology and how it relates to walking activities in mountainous country. Particular reference should be paid to physical preparation, diet, characteristics of mountain exercise, tiredness, recuperation, and altitude.

### **Physical ability**

An IML should be capable of travelling with a high degree of skill and agility over a variety of mountain terrain. They must be capable of sustained physical effort over approximately six hours.

### **Navigation**

It is essential that an IML can navigate competently using a variety of maps in all conditions and situations.

### **Weather**

The IML should have an elementary understanding of weather and its effects. The IML should be able to interpret basic synoptic charts and forecasts, be able to use basic instruments such as altimeter and thermometer and be able to use natural signs helpful to weather forecasting.

### **Security in mountainous terrain**

The IML should have the skills, knowledge and techniques to safeguard groups in the varied terrain found in the mountains, particularly in relation to real and objective dangers such as steep/exposed ground and stone fall. This should enable leaders to avoid the need to use a rope in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

### **Emergency procedures**

In order to be able to work unassisted in remote and wild places the IML should be familiar with, and be able to take effective control of the following requirements: First-aid provision, Procedures in the event of an accident to the group or leader, Management and organisation of a rescue, Methods of getting assistance such as calling a hut, use of radios and Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons – EPIRBs, etc.

### **Bivouac and survival skills**

The IML should be able to organise and care for the wellbeing of the group without support or backup, organise an improvised bivouac, look after a group in difficult and challenging conditions.

### **Expeditions**

The IML should be able to organise multi-day trips, and have the ability to co-ordinate logistics, equipment, transport and food requirements.

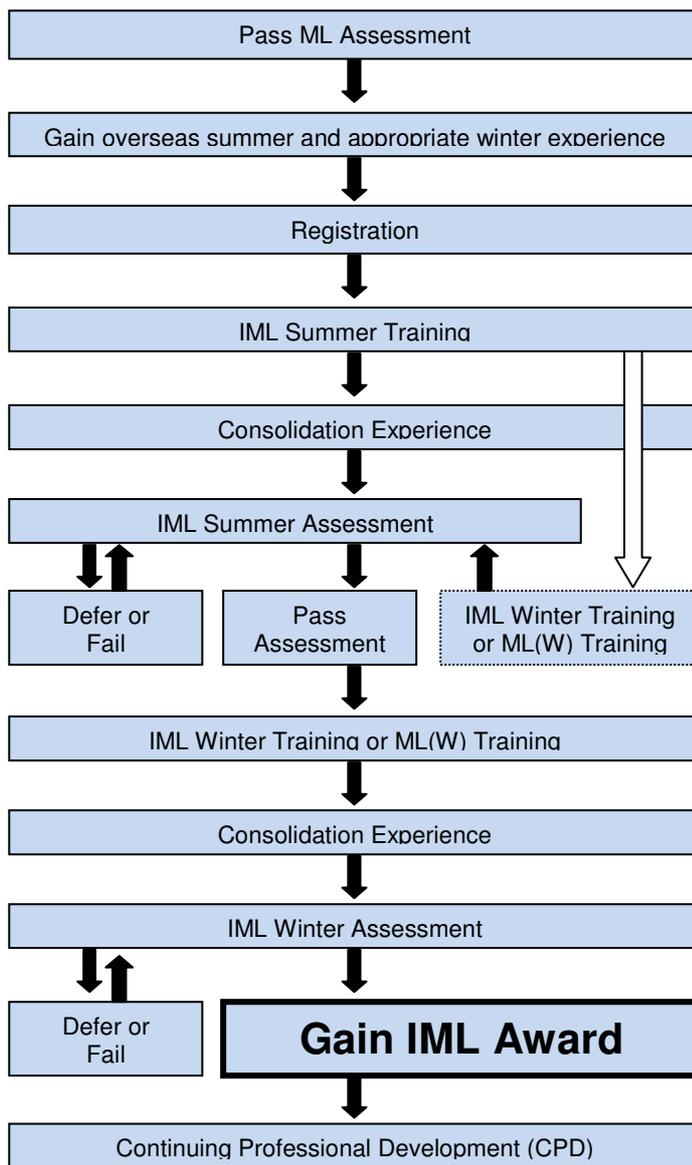
### **Snow-covered terrain**

The IML should have understanding of snow and avalanche conditions in order to lead groups safely on easy-rolling, Nordic-type terrain. Awareness of other hazards such as hidden water hazards, cornices and medical conditions associated with winter e.g. frostnip, frostbite, snow blindness. Key skills; route-planning, leading in difficult conditions, and emergency bivouacs.

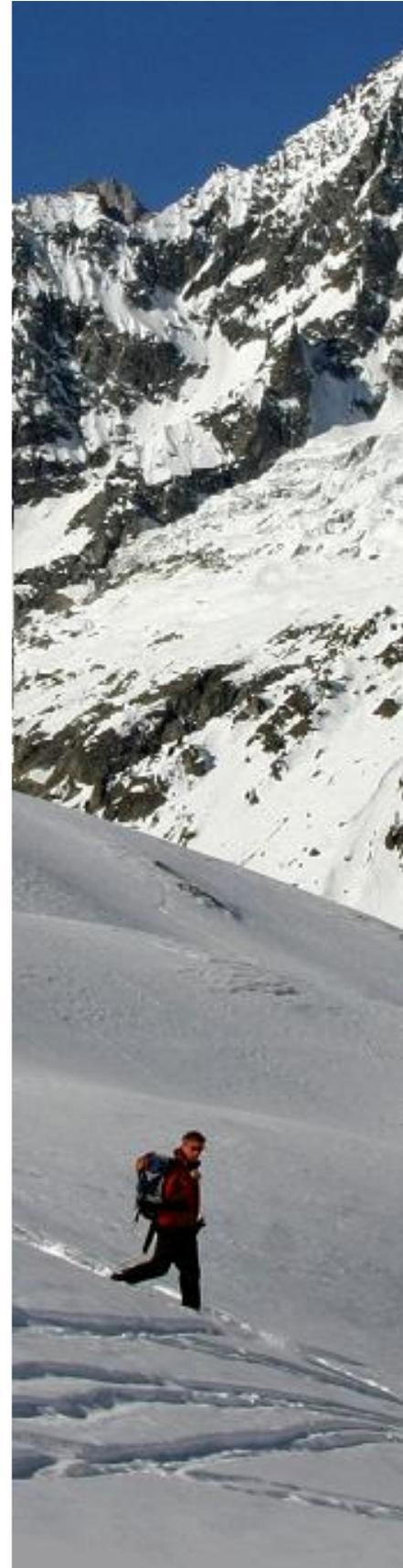


## International Mountain Leader Award Scheme at a Glance

As you can see from the flow chart below, the entry requirement for the IML scheme is the Summer Mountain Leader Award. If you have this award, the next stage is to gain experience outside the UK, that is appropriate to the award, as well as winter skills.



Once you have gained the IML award, there is still a continuous monitored training requirement, to ensure that you keep all your skills up to date, and learn new skills too. This CPD requirement is essential to keep your award valid for BAIML membership, as well as your insurance. A key point to note is that the scheme is not designed to be 'fast-tracked', and it is highly likely that anyone trying to do this will be deferred due to lack of experience.





## How long does it take to become an IML?

The length of time taken varies from candidate to candidate, depending on previous experience, spaces on various training and assessment courses, your time off, and the amount of consolidation time required. At fastest it can take someone with a Summer ML award about a year to qualify, but the norm is about three years, and many take longer. There is no time pressure to hurry through, and if you try to rush, you risk a deferral at some stage through lack of experience.

## How much does it cost to become an IML?

There are two training courses and two assessments, so four courses in total, each costing about £500. If you add travel and extras such as equipment and insurance on top of this, the total cost is about £3,000. This may sound a lot of money to invest, but for a professional qualification it is very good value.

## What should I expect to be paid as an IML?

This is a difficult question to answer, as some people gain their IML for an employer (e.g. a school), where they are on a salary anyway, and others choose to work as an IML in their holidays from an office job, whilst some work freelance. It is down to each IML to choose their daily tariffs based on how they value their services and why they are undertaking the work. We cannot state a fixed rate as this is anti-competitive, and price fixing.

## How much work is there as an IML?

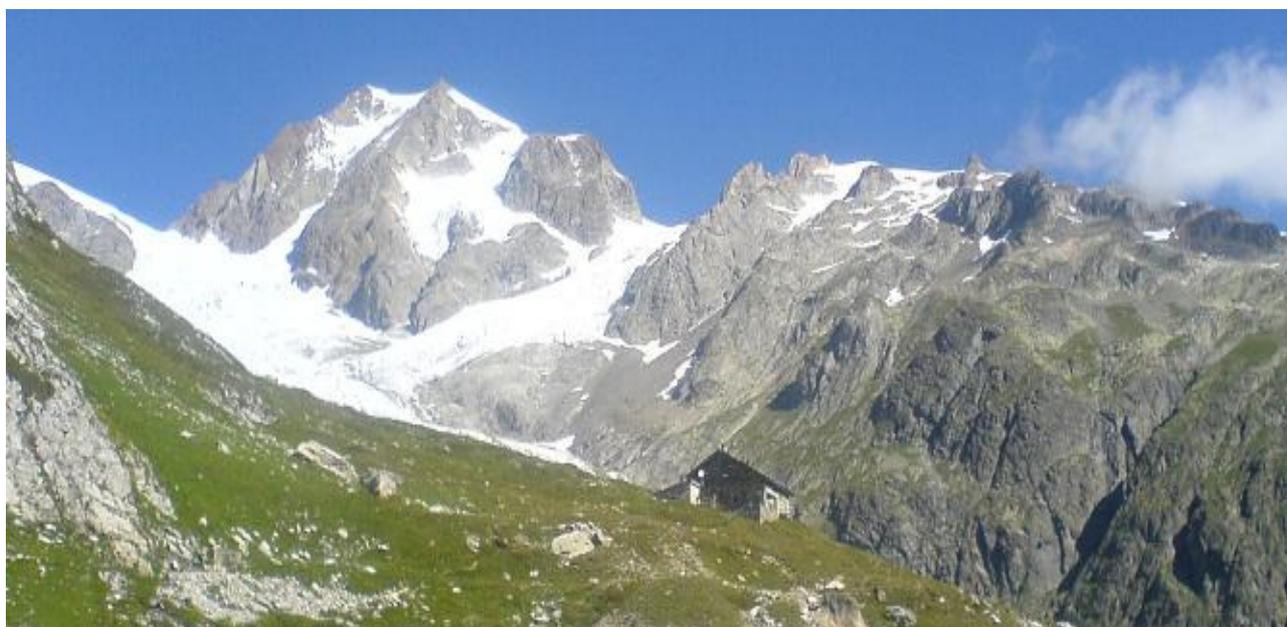
It's completely up to you! You can work every day of the year, or for just a few days a year, whatever suits. One of the attractions of the IML award is that you can work totally independently, and so can choose how much you wish to work. As Steve Long said in the introduction "I can't afford to retire early, but am rich beyond measure". Having said that, many holders of the IML have set up very successful companies, and are now striving to escape the office to rediscover why they became an IML in the first place!

## Where can I work in the world?

Anywhere you want from the Atlas to the Antarctic. The remit outlines what types of terrain you can lead groups on, but within that scope, you can travel anywhere. In fact members of BAIML are renowned for travelling to further flung corners of the world, than any other IML association. The member countries of UIMLA are set to grow rapidly, and this will further increase the stature and international recognition of the IML award.

## Is it a legal requirement to become an IML?

Yes in a few countries, it is a legal requirement to be an IML to lead groups for remuneration. Notably in France this is the case, and there are often checks on popular treks that leaders are qualified and insured to lead, where carnets and documents are inspected.





Once you are qualified, you are not alone! It is important to provide an information and support network for members, and BAIML provides just that. There is an active discussion forum on the website where members can exchange information, news and views, and each quarter members receive a copy of the BAIML journal 'The Leader'. There is a committee in place, with various contacts that you can approach for information, such as professional standards, marketing, and membership queries, to name but a few. As well as this 'distance' support, there is a scheme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which is explained in detail below, and also an Annual General Meeting. These two are essential for members to have face-to-face contact, and to discuss any current issues and topics.

### **Continuous Professional Development**

It is a condition of keeping your carnet / membership valid that IMLs do a certain amount of CPD every four year period, and this can take many forms. BAIML tries to offer a wide range of interesting CPD courses that members can undertake, from weekend bushcraft courses, to week-long snowshoeing instruction. Even undertaking a language course or something relevant to developing you as a leader could count as CPD. Each individual IML can assess their own requirements, and often these follow their interests, and the type of work that they do or wish to do. For example an IML who has good winter skills might do a cross country skiing course to learn more about the sport, to enrich their understanding, and so they can tell their clients about it. One activity that cannot count as CPD is keeping a mountain first aid certificate valid, as this is a separate requirement of being an IML. Keeping up to date with your CPD should be fun, and if it's not, there's no one at fault apart from you. BAIML also has a Training Officer, who can advise you about forthcoming CPD opportunities.

### **The BAIML Annual General Meeting**

Each year there is a BAIML AGM, that often coincides with a CPD weekend. The AGM is a great opportunity for members to meet each other, swop ideas, network, search for work, discuss issues, and broaden their knowledge. Of course there is the meeting itself, where key topics are raised and voted upon, and committee members are elected.

You should be getting the picture now, that gaining the qualification is just one part of the process, and once qualified you will strive to improve and develop as a leader. BAIML offers a great support network to help this happen. The IML qualification is more than a badge or carnet. It is a way of life and an ethos of self analysis and the desire to be the best for your clients, the profession, and for yourself. We really hope that this Guide to Candidates has opened your eyes to the opportunities, and that you understand why we value it so greatly, and are so proud to call ourselves International Mountain Leaders.





## Participation Statement

The British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML) recognises that hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions. Mountain Leader Training UK (MLTUK) approves the National Centres, Plas y Brenin and Glenmore Lodge, to provide International Mountain Leader training and assessment courses. It produces associated literature to help leaders manage these risks and to enable new participants to have positive experiences while learning about their responsibilities.

## Acknowledgements

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