

Preface to ACC Training Materials

Introduction

These training materials represent the culmination of a bottom-up (volunteer-leader-driven) process undertaken by the ACC's National Leadership Development Committee (LDC) to develop a list of ACC volunteer leader types, suggested competencies and supporting training materials that was completely driven by the ACC's Sections, active volunteer leaders and their membership. It is the result of a new approach (Shokoples and Robinson 2012) being undertaken to develop leadership skills training materials as part of a national program of technical training, one intended to help the ACC's volunteer leaders excel.

A Grassroots Approach

ACC volunteer leaders and Section representatives have made it clear through past communications with the LDC that previous attempts, over the last four decades, to provide standardized training materials for ACC volunteer leaders (developed by national panels, mountain professionals or external consultants) did not meet their needs.

Many Sections, as well as the ACC's Board of Directors, have expressed concern over the ACC's lack of a standardized national training curriculum that addresses the most common ACC volunteer leader types. In the absence of an approach developed by the ACC itself, and accepted and used willingly by the Sections and their volunteer leaders, there is the potential in the future for the ACC's being forced to accept standards that may or may not address the needs of its leaders (e.g. as a future condition of UIAA membership). This has been tried in the past and failed.

The ACC's ranks of passionate volunteer leaders have also expressed their desire for a nationally-supported training program that recognizes the diversity of ACC trip leaders, the roles they fulfill and the various types of trips they lead in Sections across Canada. They have also pointed to the variety of Section-developed materials and training programs currently in place as a potential starting point for a more formal national program that would take advantage of the expertise already found within the ACC.

The approach taken in developing these materials recognizes that past attempts to develop these types of curricula and training materials (some of them appearing to be very good products) have failed - largely because they were developed using a top-down approach whereby the Sections and their volunteer leaders were merely the recipients of materials at the end of the process. Past LDC co-chairs Zac Robinson and Cyril Shokoples proposed a grassroots approach in 2012, whereby the Sections and their leaders would be involved right from the beginning in identifying the types of volunteer leaders, as well as their required competencies and appropriate levels of proficiency, to be considered "really excellent leaders".

The ACP Process

The process proposed by the LDC, and endorsed by Section Council and the Board of Directors in October 2012, did not just involve the ACC's volunteer leaders from the beginning; it was, in fact, highly reliant on their participation and driven by their ongoing input. The LDC merely acted as facilitators, coordinating the process and ensuring the ongoing input achieved its objectives to the satisfaction of the ACC's membership.

This collaborative effort between all of the ACC Sections and the LDC took the form of a DACUMⁱ-style curriculum development approach. To initiate the process, all ACC Sections were invited to appoint a volunteer leader representative to participate in an ACC Competency Profile Working Group (ACP). ACP reps were active volunteer leaders from within their Sections who were familiar with their Section's own leadership needs and current training practices. After some early electronic communications to establish the process and a potential list of leader types, the ACP representatives and LDC members met in Lake Louise in October 2014 for a two-day workshop to finalize the list of ACC volunteer leader types found

nationally, and develop a first draft of a leader competency profile for each of them. Each Leader Type DACUM lists the competencies (as “course goals”) and related learning objectives as determined by the ACP reps.

Over the following several months, LDC members worked with the ACP reps to ensure the leader competency profiles captured their intent from the Lake Louise workshop. The draft profiles from the workshop were sent out to the ACP reps for their review, and once all were satisfied they were shared more broadly, with other volunteer leaders within their respective Sections, for further input and suggested improvements. A second version of the competency profiles was then produced and endorsed by the ACP reps by September 2015, and by the Section Council and Board of Directors in October 2015.

The final list of leader types included 15 competency profiles. In no particular order, they are:

- Hiking Trip Leader (single day)
- Backpacking Trip Leader (multi-day)
- Winter Trails Leaders
- Top Rope Rock Climbing Leader
- Trad Rock Climbing Leader
- Sport Rock Climbing Leader
- Top Rope Ice Climbing Leader
- Ice Climbing Leader
- Scrambling Leader
- Mixed Climbing Leader
- Summer Mountaineering Leader
- Winter Mountaineering Leader
- Ski Mountaineering Leader
- Winter Backcountry Leader (non-av)
- Winter Backcountry Leader (av)

ACP reps then consulted with their Sections and provided a list of each Section’s top three leader types, to be used in prioritizing development of the training modules and materials. The ACP reps’ top three selections were the Top Rope Rock Climbing Leader, Winter Backcountry Leader (av), and Summer Mountaineering Leader. In addition, the ACP reps ranked a list of applicable course goals addressing the competency profiles for each leader type based on their Section’s view of the highest-priority learning objectives for each competency. This process was completed by January 2015, and Section Council directed the LDC to pursue solicitation for development work on a training module for the Top Rope Rock Climbing Leader type.

Competencies and Volunteer Leaders in the ACC

The ACP leader profiles outline several applicable competencies for each leader type. Both the ACP and LDC recognize that there are numerous skilled and competent volunteer leaders currently active in ACC Sections, and not all of them will have high proficiency in every competency identified in the applicable profile. It is not the intent of the LDC or the ACP reps to define the minimum levels of proficiency in each competency for a given leader type necessary to lead Section trips. The relative importance or necessity for proficiency in each competency will vary across the country according to the context in which each Section leads their trips.

It is therefore up to individual Sections to decide on both which competencies are absolutely necessary for the various leader types in their Section's context, and what appropriate minimum levels of proficiency are in each competency relative to their Section's needs.

ACC members interested in leadership, and aspiring volunteer trip leaders can consider the applicable Competency Profile to represent the ACC's definition of what skills an exceptional volunteer leader of a given type would have or aspire to develop. It is possible that excellent volunteer leaders already leading Section trips may not have the highest levels of proficiency in all competencies. This should NOT be taken to mean they are no longer qualified to continue leading Section trips; rather, the competency profile can be used by these individuals as a road map for continued personal leadership development.

ACC Top Rope Rock Climbing Leader Module

Development of the instructional materials and content contained here directly followed the competencies in the Top Rope Rock Climbing Leader Competency Profile produced and endorsed by the ACP. Additionally, developers considered both the variety of ACC training materials already in use in various Sections across the country, as well as the volunteer leader context.

This package of Top Rope Leader materials is the first in a planned series of modules intended to enable ACC members and potential leaders to gain the necessary competencies, as identified by the Section ACP reps, to become a "really excellent" leader for ACC top rope rock climbing trips.

The support materials contained herein are intended to help facilitate instruction by ACC volunteers, professional outdoor educators, or guides. Individual ACC Sections may choose to simply refer to them to augment existing Section training materials, or use them as the basis for their own local volunteer training programs. They may choose to use volunteers from within their own or other Sections, or professional instructors, in the delivery of all or some of the materials presented.

The Role of the Instructor

Needs to recognize the students are volunteers, and though some may have or achieve competency levels approaching those of professionals, it is not necessary to voluntarily lead trips.

Ask questions of the section and its leaders to ensure you deliver the material most applicable to their leader context and in the most effective manner possible.

Recognize the current proficiency levels in your audience (aspiring leaders, experienced, expert, or a likely a mixture).

The Role of the Student

Give back to the club.

Share what you know.

Recognize your own limitations.

Strive for continuous improvement.

^{i 1} DACUM is an acronym for Developing a Curriculum. Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) is a process that incorporates the use of a focus group in a facilitated storyboarding process to capture the major duties and related tasks included in an occupation, as well as, the necessary knowledge, skills, and traits. (facilitation.eku.edu/what-developing-curriculum-dacum; accessed June 21, 2016).