

AMERICAN MOUNTAIN GUIDES ASSOCIATION

ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

Version 2011 .1



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AMGA ACCREDITATION GUIDELINES

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Acknowledgments

The AMGA accreditation program evolved from a safety review system used by Outward Bound since 1972. This manual was initially written in 1988 by Ian Wade, former safety officer for Outward Bound USA and past president of the AMGA. It was revised in 1992 by Steven Young, AMGA Executive Secretary, in 1995 by K.C. Baum, AMGA Accreditation Review Director and in 2002 by Jon Tierney with assistance from K.C. Baum, Marc Chauvin, Alain Comeau, Mark Houston, Arthur Haines, Joe Lentini, Charlie Townsend , Todd Vogel and Ed Crothers. The present version builds upon their work.

I. AMGA ACCREDITATION OVERVIEW

The American Mountain Guides Association Accreditation Program has been developed for guiding programs, schools and services. Certification in specific disciplines by the AMGA is the international standard for individual guides. The AMGA is this country's only organization to offer a comprehensive training and certification program for mountain guides that is recognized by the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA). Additionally, it is the only organization in the United States that offers training and certification for climbing instructor that has been endorsed by the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA.) While AMGA certification is for individuals and accreditation is for programs, an important goal of AMGA accreditation is to tie AMGA and IFMGA certification of individual guides to accreditation. The accreditation program promotes certification within accredited programs through mentoring, training, supervision, and financial support for the individual guide seeking certification.

While one of the AMGA's goals is to have all professional guides be certified or in the process of becoming certified, it recognizes that many professional guides within the U.S. are not certified and were trained prior to the AMGA's acceptance in the IFMGA. As a result, the certification of professional guides is in the midst of a period of transition from the pre-certification period (numerous uncertified guides with many years of experience) to the post-certification period (professional guides in every Accredited program will be certified or in the certification process). During this transition period, AMGA certified guides will provide training in accredited programs. The AMGA Accreditation Program relies on experienced based guides trained and mentored by AMGA certified guides. The Accreditation Program was developed by professional guides and climbing instructors who are leaders in the outdoor industry. The Accreditation Director oversees the program, assisted by the Accreditation Committee which is made up of AMGA certified guides in the Rock, Alpine, and Ski disciplines.

Benefits to Accredited programs include:

- Improves your program through a thorough review of your business practices and infrastructure that focuses on encouraging and assisting programs in efforts to improve program quality.
- Provides opportunities for continuing staff education and professional development by giving your full-time guides a 5% discount on AMGA Mountain Guide Program courses and exams.
- Includes access to AMGA growing brand strength through the use of the AMGA Accreditation Logo in marketing and promotional materials.
- Gives greater exposure for your organization by being listed on the AMGA website, which includes a link to your website, company logo, and contact information. Note: the AMGA website averages 1000 hits a day.
- Ability to post jobs at no charge on AMGA's website, in the monthly E-newsletter, and in the AMGA Blog and Facebook sites.
- Offers access to public lands where AMGA Accreditation or Certification is required to obtain a commercial use permit.
- Includes an invitation to all employees, non-AMGA and AMGA members, to attend the AMGA Annual Conference and participate in free professional development clinics
- Promotes greater brand recognition through AMGA ads run in Rock and Ice, and Climbing magazines.
- Demonstrates to clients, potential clients, land management agencies, and competitors that your program is in compliance with nationally and internationally recognized performance standards.

- Adds credibility to the development of guiding and climbing instruction as a profession and improves public perception of the performance of the profession as a whole.
- Offers protection against unwanted regulation or court rulings by demonstrating to federal, state, and local regulators a commitment to the “public good” through a voluntary review process and commitment to high industry standards.
- Provides support, advocacy, and lobbying on access and regulatory issues.

The Accreditation program is a voluntary means of quality assurance and peer evaluation focusing on international standards for guided climbing, mountaineering, and skiing. Accreditation examines such things as operating guidelines, access, permits, insurance, employment and business practices, and guide training. AMGA accreditation is not an in-depth evaluation of a company’s guides or their individual skills. It constitutes a general business review. Accreditation provides a consistent and meaningful standard by which to judge the reliability and professionalism of a climbing program. It informs the general public and land managers that a program utilizes guides who are certified and that all guides in the program have received formal training appropriate to the terrain they guide.

II. BECOMING ACCREDITED—THE PROCESS

Accreditation Application Fee: \$1000

Steps to Accreditation

1. Application and Initiation

Programs contact the AMGA Accreditation Director to discuss eligibility of said program for AMGA Accreditation. If eligible, the operator is directed to the Accreditation Guidelines Manual and Application on the AMGA web site

2. Accreditation Manual and Application

This packet can be accessed on the AMGA website. It includes a description of the AMGA Accreditation Program and guidelines to help the operator complete the process. The following forms are included:

- a. Self-Assessment Operations Overview
- b. Guide/Employee Roster Spreadsheets (fill out 1 per applicable program category)
- c. Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The next step is for the program to complete forms a-c and submit them to the AMGA Accreditation Director along with the accreditation fee. This fee covers accreditation review expenses and includes the organizations' dues to the AMGA as a supporting member for that year. The self-assessment report and supporting documents are carefully reviewed by the Accreditation Director who may ask for more information or clarification. At this point, the Accreditation Director may also propose actions that a program should take as part of the accreditation process.

The following document should accompany the application packet:

- Operations/Guide's Manual
- Copies of Land Use Permits
- Copies of Liability Insurance
- Copies of Vehicle Insurance (if applicable)
- Copy of Workman's Compensation Insurance
- Contact information for Land Managers
- Contact information for guides/employees
- Current Business License

Note: When possible, all this information should be sent electronically as a DVD, CD or attachment to an email. Doing so expedites the review process.

The Accreditation Director will provide feedback where applicable. These documents will be held with the utmost respect and confidentiality. The Accreditation Director will again examine these internal documents onsite during the spot checks referred to in section III (Maintaining Accreditation).

3. Accreditation Report/ Organization Responses*

The Accreditation Director will review the results of the self-assessment and supporting information and prepare a final report with recommendations. The Accreditation Director then recommends to the Accreditation Committee to:

1. Grant accreditation.
2. Defer accreditation contingent on additional information or specified corrective actions. If accreditation is deferred based on additional corrective measures being needed, the program will have 60 days to respond with a plan of action. The Accreditation Director and Accreditation Committee will not make a formal decision to grant accreditation status until the program has responded in writing and all required changes have been met. Evidence that a program has met required changes may be based on one or more of the following:
 - a. A written report indicating requested improvements have been made.
 - b. A meeting of representatives of the program with the accreditation committee.
3. Deny accreditation. A program whose weaknesses are too numerous, too significant, or who has issues that cannot be eliminated within a prescribed period of time may be denied accreditation status at this time.

The Accreditation Committee will respond to the Accreditation Director's recommendation within 10 working days. Failure to respond within 10 working days will be interpreted as a committee member's support of the Accreditation Director's recommendation.

Any additional expenses incurred by the Accreditation Director as a result of a protracted review or appeal will be born by the program.

*Note that until the Accreditation Director notifies a program, only the Accreditation Director may disseminate information about a decision. Following notification, decisions on applications shall be public information unless an appeal is in progress. The AMGA may release information to other agencies, media, and its membership about the accreditation status of programs.

4. Appeals

The final decision of the Accreditation Director may be appealed in writing within thirty days by the program to the Accreditation Director. The Accreditation Director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal and forward it to the Accreditation Committee for immediate resolution through communication with the program.

If agreement cannot be reached, then the issue will be forwarded to the AMGA Board for action at the next scheduled board meeting. The Board may appoint an independent committee to consider the appeal or the Board may hear the appeal itself. If a committee is appointed, they will make a recommendation to the Board at the next scheduled meeting. The decision of the Board at this meeting will be final and must be by a majority vote.

5. Accreditation Contract

If the Accreditation Director grants accreditation, an accreditation contract will then be signed by both the program and the AMGA. Sample contract below:

AMGA ACCREDITATION CONTRACT

4 Year Term

This contract dated //, between the American Mountain Guides Association (AMGA) and.....
an AMGA Accredited Program sets forth certain terms of the AMGA Accredited Program.

(1) The length of the accreditation term is four (4) years commencing from the final approval date set forth by the AMGA Accreditation Director in a confirmation letter. The length of the term commences from the final approval date through December 31 of the fourth year. For example, a program accredited in April 2008 is current through December 31, 2012. In the case of a program seeking reaccreditation, the length of the contract is 4 years from the expiration date of the last contract.

The current four (4) year accreditation expiration date is

(2) An expiration notice will be sent out by the AMGA office twelve (12) months prior to the expiration of the term, and it is the responsibility of the accredited program to apply for and complete a re-review before the term expires (unless special arrangements have been made with the AMGA Accreditation Director or if the AMGA cannot accommodate). If the accredited program has not responded to the AMGA office by the expiration date, a letter of accreditation termination shall be sent out within one (1) month after the date of expiration. Once a previously accredited program had received a letter of termination, the program is expressly prohibited from any further use of the AMGA logo and associated AMGA Accredited Program advertising in any and all public literature. Furthermore, the expired program will be dropped from the list of AMGA Accredited Programs and must reapply through the AMGA office if future accreditation is desired.

(3) An AMGA Accredited Program shall conduct its business in accordance with the standards set forth by the AMGA. These standards are documented in the AMGA Code of Ethics and the Accreditation Manual and should be fully understood and adhered to by all AMGA Accredited Programs. A program in violation of these standards will be subject to remedial action by the AMGA, which could result in suspension or revocation of accredited status. An appeal committee will be appointed by the AMGA Board of Directors to review any complaints received, conduct a review if necessary, and decide on a remedial action. A program that has its accredited status entirely revoked must apply for a re-review before it can be re-granted accredited status.

(4) It is required that all AMGA Accredited Programs join the AMGA at the Accredited Program Member level and pay the associated annual membership dues. A program's accredited status will be suspended by the AMGA Accreditation Director if the membership dues are over three (3) months delinquent.

The current contribution expiration date is

Guide Service/School:

Signed By: Date:

American Mountain Guides Association

Signed By: Date:

AMGA Accreditation Director

III. MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

Duration Of Accreditation

Accreditation remains valid as long as terrain guideline standards are maintained. A full Accreditation Self-Assessment must be submitted every four years along with the fee.

Changes That Could Affect Accreditation

- New ownership
- Guides not meeting terrain requirements
- High incidence of fatalities or serious injuries within the program
- Loss of insurance
- Violation of AMGA code of ethics, such as illegal guiding or false marketing

The self-assessment process relies on honest reporting. If a program no longer meets accreditation requirements, it must report this to the AMGA Accreditation Director who will work with the program if it desires to maintain accreditation. Spot reviews are a necessary adjunct of any honor system and are an integral part of the AMGA accreditation process.

Spot Reviews

Spot field or administrative reviews may also be done at any point during the accreditation period to ensure compliance with accreditation guidelines. A field review can also be requested by a program, essentially for consulting purposes. The fee for this is determined by the size of the program and complexity of the review. The minimum fee begins at \$1000 plus expenses.

Issues Arising During Accreditation Period

If evidence is found that an accredited organization program has fallen below accepted practices or has breached the accreditation contract then one of the following actions will be taken by the accreditation committee based upon the “size” of the issue:

- Send letter of concern
- Send letter of warning
- Accreditation is immediately suspended pending further investigation
- Revocation

Accreditation Marketing Guidelines

The primary purpose of accreditation is to provide education and feedback to a program and a general assurance to the public that the organization has demonstrated ability to meet industry standards. Once achieved, programs may freely market their accredited status within AMGA guidelines.

Programs may not utilize any statements, logos, or graphics that suggest that they are accredited, or likely to be accredited, until they have received notification from the Accreditation Director that they are accredited.

Programs who advertise falsely are subject to revocation of AMGA membership, of AMGA accreditation, and possibly legal action.

If "Accredited Status" is granted to a college, school, summer camp, or other program within which climbing instruction and guiding is one of several sports or activities being conducted, that program's publication of its "AMGA Accredited Status" must include wording, indicating the specific aspects of the program that have been accredited—rock climbing, alpine, ski mountaineering.

IV. EDUCATIONAL AND TERRAIN STANDARDS

An accredited program employs guides who have received specialized guide education or who can document significant experience appropriate to the terrain they guide. Accredited programs utilize AMGA certified guides to conduct trainings and help mentor individual guides through the AMGA certification process. Before looking at accreditation requirements by terrain category, it may help to better define some of these terms. Additional information concerning both supervision and mentoring is available from the AMGA office.

Guide Levels

Lead Guides: AMGA certified guides in one or more disciplines appropriate to the terrain they work in. It is required that accredited programs employ at least one AMGA certified guide for each of the disciplines they either guide or offer instruction in. These guides can work as supervisors and mentors. The exception to this requirement applies to Ski Guide and Ski Mountaineering Guide terrain. In these two disciplines a Lead Guide can either be AMGA certified, have received specialized guide education or who can document significant experience appropriate to the terrain they guide.

Guides: Guides who have received specialized guide education or who can document significant experience appropriate to the terrain they guide. In some situations these guides can work as supervisors, mentors or may require general supervision.

Assistant Guides: Guides who do not meet the requirements for Lead Guides or Guides who require direct supervision. Also included in this category are interns, guest professional climbers, etc.

Supervision Guidelines

Supervision of guides is a serious commitment and expected of accredited programs. In such relationships, a measure of the responsibility for a guide's actions and the results of those actions, whether they are good or bad, lie with the supervising guide and the employer.

General Supervision: Supervisors are expected to meet regularly with guides and to provide periodic briefings and debriefings about route selection, strategy and client care along with regular progress and performance reviews. It is the supervising guide's responsibility to ensure that assigned tasks are appropriate to a guide's training and ability.

Direct Supervision is required in some instances. Direct supervision implies daily briefings and debriefings about route selection, strategy, client care for the day and side by side guiding such as two rope teams traveling together on a glacier or on nearby multi-pitch routes.

Accredited Programs And Mentoring

From the perspective of the AMGA, one of the more important roles played by accredited programs is mentoring individual guides through the certification process. The AMGA certification process requires guides to work professionally, documenting a required number of guiding days between entry level and advanced courses and between courses and exams. While the mentoring process is well developed in other IFMGA countries, it is still evolving in the U.S., and accredited programs approach mentoring in several different ways. AMGA accredited programs enable individual guides to get the professional experience they need to pursue certification. Some organizations provide direct financial support for guides taking AMGA courses and exams. Some provide in-house guide trainings specifically designed to help guides prepare for AMGA exams.

In-House Training

AMGA accredited programs should provide training to their staffs in the disciplines in which they guide. For an organization operating in all 7 program categories, this would involve 6 training days a year, 2 each for guides working in rock, alpine, and ski mountaineering. In any year, an AMGA course can replace a guides' training requirement in the appropriate category. AMGA certification meets in-house training requirements.

Who Is Considered A Guide Or Instructor?

Any employee directly responsible for client care in terrain as described under the terrain guidelines. Interns, guest professional climbers, etc. may work alongside a qualified guide or instructor.

Program Categories for AMGA accreditation:

1. Single Pitch Instructor
2. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain
3. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Guide Terrain
4. Alpine Guide Terrain
5. Advanced Alpine Guide Terrain
6. Ski Guide Terrain
7. Ski Mountaineering Guide Terrain

Accreditation Standards by Program Category

1. Single Pitch, or Ice Climbing Instruction

This category includes programs teaching climbing in a top rope or single pitch setting with straightforward approaches and descents that do not involve short rope techniques.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual terrain-appropriate training in top rope/single pitch (or higher level) instruction. An AMGA Certified Top Rope Site Manager, Single Pitch Instructor, Rock Instructor, or Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor. Basic First Aid/CPR is the minimum required of instructors working closer to advanced medical care.

Staff Requirements: Option 1: provide at least one certified AMGA Certified Single Pitch Instructor per site—a site is defined as an area where all ropes are within easy and unaided visual and verbal communication. **Option 2:** An individual who is not an AMGA Certified Single Pitch Instructor but who has taken and passed a higher level AMGA rock course, aspirant exam or exam also qualifies.

2. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain

This category includes rock climbing ascents (to Grade III) on routes with reasonably straightforward approaches and descents that do not involve significant use of short rope techniques.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in rock climbing instruction. An AMGA Certified Rock Instructor or Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor. Basic First Aid/CPR is the minimum required of instructors working closer to advanced medical care.
- C. **Lead Guide Requirements:** Lead guides are AMGA Certified Rock Instructors or Rock Guides.
- D. **Guide Requirements:** Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:
 - 1. A resume of **guide trainings;** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 - 2. A **guide resume** documenting 100 days of professional rock guiding of multi-pitch routes in the last five years;
 - 3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 50 multi-pitch traditional climbs. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.
- E. **Assistant Staff Requirements:** Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

3. Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Guide Terrain

This includes full day ascents (Grade IV and above) and/or routes with complicated approaches and descents that often involve a wide variety of rope techniques and transitions.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in rock climbing instruction. A certified Rock Guide must teach this training.

- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor..
- C. **Lead Guide Requirements:** Lead guides are AMGA Certified Rock Guides.
- D. **Guide Requirements:** **Option 1:** Guides have taken the AMGA Rock Instructor Course and will be expected to take the AMGA Rock Guides course once they meet the professional experience requirements for the course. **Option 2:** Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:
 1. A resume of **guide trainings;** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 2. A **guide resume** documenting 200 days of professional rock guiding of multi-pitch routes in the last five years;
 3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 50 multi-pitch traditional climbs. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.
- E. **Assistant Staff Requirements:** Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

4. Alpine Guide Terrain

This includes non-glaciated technical terrain typical of the Sierra or Rockies where a variety of rock and snow climbing skills and rope techniques will need to be employed.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in alpine guiding. An AMGA Certified Alpine Guide or AMGA Certified Rock Guide who is a graduate of the AMGA Alpine Guides course must teach this training.
- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor.
- C. **Lead Guide Requirements:** Lead guides are AMGA Certified Alpine Guides.
- D. **Guide Requirements:** **Option 1:** Guides have taken the AMGA Alpine course. **Option 2:** Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:
 1. A resume of **guide trainings;** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 2. A **guide resume** documenting 100 days of professional alpine guiding in the last five years;
 3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 30 alpine climbs representative of the terrain in which they guide. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.
- E. **Assistant Staff Requirements:** Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

5. Advanced Alpine Guide Terrain

This typically involves glaciated terrain such as that found in the Cascades and Alaska where a variety of travel and guiding techniques will need to be employed.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in alpine guiding. An AMGA Certified Alpine Guide must teach this training.

- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor.
- C. **Avalanche Training:** Lead guides require Level II avalanche training if operating in forecasted areas and AMGA approved Level III avalanche training if operating in non-forecasted areas.
- D. **Lead Guide Requirements:** Lead guides are Certified AMGA Alpine Guides.
- E. **Guide Requirements: Option 1:** Guides have taken the AMGA Alpine Guides Course. In these cases, these guides will be expected to take the AMGA Advanced Alpine Guides course once they meet the professional experience requirements for the course. **Option 2:** Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation Director and Committee upon request:
 - 1. A resume of **guide trainings;** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 - 2. A **guide resume** documenting 100 days of professional alpine guiding representative of the terrain in which they guide
 - 3. A **personal climbing resume** spanning at least 5 years including at least 30 alpine climbs representative of the terrain in which they guide. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.
- F. **Assistant Staff Requirements:** Assistants not meeting Lead Guide or Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide or Guide.

6. Ski Guide Terrain

This involves predominantly ski tours in the mountains including ascents and descents on non-glaciated terrain.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual terrain-appropriate training in ski guiding. An AMGA Certified Ski or Ski Mountaineering Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor.
- C. **Avalanche Training:** Lead guides require Level II avalanche training if operating in forecasted areas and AMGA approved Level III avalanche training if operating in non-forecasted areas.
- D. **Lead Guide Requirements: Option 1:** Lead guides have taken the AMGA Ski Guides or higher course. **Option 2:** Lead Guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation committee upon request:
 - 1. A resume of **guide trainings;** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 - 2. A **guide resume** documenting 30 days ski guiding in backcountry terrain.
 - 3. A **personal resume** spanning at least 3 years documenting at least 50 days skiing in terrain similar to that which they guide. Sample resume forms for both personal and guided climbs are available at www.amga.com.
- E. **Assistant Staff Requirements:** Assistants not meeting Lead Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide.

7. Ski Mountaineering Guide Terrain

This involves predominantly ski tours in the mountains including ascents and descents on glaciated terrain.

Accredited programs operating in this terrain will meet the following criteria:

- A. **Specific Training:** Programs provide a minimum of two days of annual training in ski guiding. An AMGA Certified Ski Mountaineering Guide must teach this training.
- B. **Medical Training:** All staff are required to hold Wilderness First Responder certification or higher if working over two hours from advanced care. Examples of higher certifications include Emergency Medical Technician, Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician, Physician's Assistant, Registered Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Medical Doctor.
- C. **Avalanche Training:** All guides require Level II avalanche training if operating in forecasted areas and AMGA approved Level III avalanche training if operating in non-forecasted areas.
- D. **Lead Guide Requirements: Option 1:** Lead guides have taken the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides Course. Lead guides may be hired who have taken only the Ski Guides Course. In these cases, these guides will be expected to take the AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guides course once they meet the professional experience requirements for the course. **Option 2:** Lead guides have, at the minimum, the following experience which is documented and available to the Accreditation committee upon request:
 - 1. A resume of **guide trainings** including skills covered, dates of training, routes, trainers, and curriculum.
 - 2. A guide resume documenting 30 days ski guiding in glaciated terrain.
 - 3. A personal resume spanning at least 5 years documenting at least 100 days skiing in terrain similar to that which they guide.
- E. **Assistant Staff Requirements:** Assistants not meeting Lead Guide requirements require direct supervision by a Lead Guide.

V. AMGA ACCREDITATION SELF-ASSESSMENT

Directions:

The self-assessment process requires that a program provide a concise response to each of the following statements or questions. This report will then be reviewed by the Accreditation Director or, if there is a conflict of interest for the AD, the Accreditation Committee will appoint a reviewer, who may request additional information. It is intended as a tool for internal critique and peer review for the program.

This self-assessment is required when first applying for AMGA accreditation and every four years thereafter. This self-assessment includes an operations overview (V.1.A.), guide roster spreadsheets (V.1.B.)(one per program category), and a self assessment questionnaire (V.1.C.).

AMGA Accreditation Self Assessment Forms

1. **Operations Overview**
2. **Guide Roster Spreadsheets** – one per program category.
3. **Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

V. 1. OPERATIONS OVERVIEW FORM

Organization Name, Address, Phone, web site, Email

How many years in operation?

Years in operation by present ownership/management?

Program Category*:	Annual client program days **
Top Rope/Single Pitch Rock Climbing	_____
Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Instructor Terrain	_____
Multi-Pitch Climbing, Rock Guide Terrain	_____
Alpine Guide Terrain	_____
Advanced Alpine Terrain	_____
Ski Guiding Terrain	_____
Ski Mountaineering Terrain	_____

**Check all programs that apply. Note that the categories may not describe all of your programs' operations. Instead, they describe the areas where the AMGA has training programs and standards in place. When a client day might legitimately be listed in more than one category, do so. (For example, an alpine rock climb might be both an alpine day and a multi-pitch day.) The AMGA also recognizes that individual cases may not fit neatly into program categories. Significant glaciation, for instance, is frequently taken to be the distinction between alpine and advanced alpine terrain, but some glaciated peaks and routes may be quite strait-forward in terms of guiding and better fit in Alpine Guide Terrain. These questions can be discussed with the Accreditation Director prior to completing the Application.*

*** Accreditation focuses on an organization's primary program categories. You need not submit guide rosters in Program Categories that comprise less than 3% of total client program days.*

Approximate percentage of client days spent in each season:

Winter _____

Spring _____

Summer _____

Fall _____

What internal trainings have you run in the last year? Give dates and list per program category.

V. 2. GUIDE ROSTER SPREADSHEETS

Directions:

Please attach one per program category. These need not be redundant. For example, let's imagine a rock climbing guide service with 10 guides. 3 are qualified as "Lead Guides" for Rock Guide Terrain (which automatically means they are an AMGA Certified Rock Guides; 3 more are "Lead Guide" qualified only for TR/SPI and Rock Instructor Terrain; the remaining 4 are only qualified for Top Rope Terrain. The Top Rope Guide Roster Spreadsheet would list the 4 Top Rope/Single Pitch only guides. The Rock Instructor Guide spreadsheet would list only the 3 Rock Instructors; the Rock Guide spreadsheet would list only the 3 Rock Guides. It would be assumed that Rock Guides would sometimes work in TR/SP and Rock Instructor Terrain and that Rock Instructors would also do TR/SP days.

Number of full time guides _____

Number of part time guides _____

If this is a reaccreditation review:

Number of guides that have taken AMGA courses or exams since last review _____

Number of new AMGA certified guides since last review _____

V.2.a. Single Pitch Instructor Program Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for top rope rock or ice climbing instruction in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified SPI (Y/N)	Higher Level AMGA Rock or Alpine Course (Specify)	Meets Rock or Alpine Guide Requirements (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor				
Lead Guides				
Guides				
Assistant Guides				

V.2.b. Multi Pitch Climbing Program, Rock Instructor Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for multi-pitch climbing, rock instructor terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Rock Instructor (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Meets <i>Guide</i> Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor				
Lead Guides				
Guides				
Assistant Guides				

V.2.c. Multi-pitch climbing, Rock Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for multi-pitch climbing, rock guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Rock Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Meets <i>Guide</i> Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor				
Lead Guides				
Guides				
Assistant Guides				

V.2.d. Alpine Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for alpine guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Alpine Guide (Y/N)	Certified Rock Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Meets <i>Guide</i> Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.2.e. Advanced Alpine Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for advanced alpine guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Alpine Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Avalanche Training (List)	Meets <i>Guide</i> Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.2.f. Ski Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for ski guide terrain in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Ski Guide or Ski Mountaineering Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Avalanche Training (List)	Meets <i>Lead Guide</i> Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.2.g. Ski Mountaineering Guide Terrain Spreadsheet

Please refer to the list of accreditation requirements for ski mountaineering guide in section IV of the Accreditation Guidelines.

Guide Roster	Certified Ski Mountaineering Guide (Y/N)	Other AMGA Courses/Certifications (List)	Avalanche Training (List)	Meets <i>Lead Guide</i> Experiential Req's (Y/N)	Medical Training (Specify)
Supervisor					
Lead Guides					
Guides					
Assistant Guides					

V.3. AMGA ACCREDITATION SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions:

This questionnaire must be filled out when applying for accreditation and, for programs meeting the 2006 terrain guidelines, every 4 years thereafter. Please answer the following questions concisely, but describe the full scope of your operations.

Philosophy

1. Describe your program's mission.

Land Management Relationships and Permits/Licenses

2. List areas of operation, contact information for each land owner, and access and insurance requirements
3. Describe the nature of the organization's business relationship with each land manager. What programs operate in each area?
4. Describe how employees are made aware of applicable rules and regulations at all areas of operation.
5. Describe how clients are made aware of applicable rules and regulations at all areas of operation.

Insurance

6. Does the program have current liability insurance that covers all types of activities the guide service participates in?
7. Describe how an individual guide is insured in the event of an at-work injury.

Marketing

8. Do the organization's marketing materials clearly and honestly describe the scope of the company's activities?
9. How do the organization's marketing materials clearly and honestly describe the risk associated with the company's activities?
10. (Provide a copy of annual brochure or primary marketing material).

Client registration and screening

11. How does the organization screen participants to select activities appropriate for the participant?
12. Is the organization willing to decline clients not properly ready for outings? Please provide some examples.
13. How does the organization provide appropriate medical screening of clients?
14. How does the organization clearly inform clients about the nature of activities and potential risk?
15. How does the organization verify that participants are adequately aware of potential risk?
16. How does the organization inform participants of their responsibilities during the outing?
17. Do orientation and liability waiver materials adequately describe the scope of the companies' activities and risks inherent in them? Are they easy to read and understand?

18. Is there a written policy prohibiting drug and alcohol use by participants in the orientation materials?
19. Describe the organization's evaluation process in place to obtain feedback from participants?

Personnel / Training

20. Are guides hired as employees or independent contractors?
 - a. If independent contractors, are they covered under the company's liability insurance policy?
21. How is each employee provided with an accurate and current position description?
22. Briefly outline how the program's employees/guides will be mentored through the AMGA certification process
23. Does the organization maintain a staff file for each employee that includes: personal experience, guide training, medical certifications, recent trainings, evaluations, current medical history, employment history, current resume, letters of reference, and current contract?
24. Are instructors or guides allowed to work outside of the terrain designations established by the AMGA accreditation committee?
25. Do employees participate in a minimum of two days of related training / continuing education in each discipline per year, either internal or external to the organization?
26. Is there regular communication, cooperation, and respect among managers and guides?
27. How does the organization evaluate instructors and guides after each season and/or course, and advise on professional development needs?
28. How do employees maintain knowledge of current technology and methods?
29. Describe the screening process for assessing levels of technical skill, experience, and judgment of potential guides.
30. Describe how direct and indirect supervision of aspirant guides occurs (staff meetings, debriefings after trips, debriefings with course participants, course evaluation forms).

Operations Manual

31. Is a complete, detailed operations manual provided to each employee?
32. How does the organization ensure that employees are adequately acquainted with the manual?
33. Are there situations when deviation from manual may occur?

Equipment

34. Who provides the equipment for the lesson or guided trip?
35. Describe the organization's documentation and retirement policy for equipment?
36. Is loaned or rented participant equipment in good condition and stored properly when not in use?

34. Are employees and participants trained in the proper use/care of the equipment?

Client Care

37. How does the organization ensure that the Instructors and guides conduct activities appropriate to the ability of the client?

38. Are staff ratios determined and appropriate for each activity? Please describe.

39. How does the organization ensure that employees are aware of specific medical needs of clients?

Program Activities and Safety

40. Is there a management review process to authorize new program activities or areas of operation?

41. How does the organization ensure that activities use practices that protect the participants from the reasonably foreseeable risks of harm?

42. How does the organization ensure that guides skill is sufficiently above the participant skill and knowledge level to respond effectively in an emergency?

43. Are guides consciously anticipating the hazards prior to undertaking activities?

44. How are participants properly briefed and progressively readied for the activity?

45. Are anchors, belay, rappel, and camping procedures consistent with current practices?

46. Do the guides use helmets appropriately in the activities?

47. Do the participants use helmets appropriately in the activities?

48. Describe how participants are clearly informed about necessary clothing and equipment.

Risk Management

49. Does the organization have written operational risk management guidelines for each terrain classification and for overall operation? Briefly outline the emergency plans in place for all areas of operation.

50. Has the organization evaluated the availability of medical and rescue assistance in each of its areas of operation? Briefly describe the emergency communication plan established to facilitate rescue and medical service for all areas of operation?

51. How do managers of the program keep informed about what is actually taking place with participants?

52. Describe how managers and supervisors monitor and address program safety concerns.

53. Is there a clear incident/accident/near miss reporting procedure. Please describe.

54. Is there a clear serious injury and death response procedure written? Has the organization developed a notification process for accidents and emergencies?

55. Has the company had any accidents or near misses? If so, explain.

56. Are staff adequately trained and currently certified in emergency medical care skills? Staff operating within 1 – 2 hours of clinical care must have Wilderness First Aid training. Those operating in more remote environments must be at least Wilderness First Responders.
57. Are first aid kits and evacuation equipment appropriate to the activity and readily available, and is staff familiar with these? Please describe.
58. Are first aid supplies carried on multi-pitch routes?
59. Which of the following paperwork exists and is actively used? Please submit copies of this paperwork with this application. Doing so will expedite the review process

Mission, Goals, Objectives

- Personnel Files (resume, guide carnet, training, certifications) 1 personnel file is sufficient provided it accurately represents information kept on file for each employee.
- Staff medical history / emergency contact information form
- Participant medical history / emergency contact information form
- Field injury report form
- First aid equipment list
- Acknowledgment of Risk / Waiver of Claims form
- Insurance coverage – proof of current:
 - Liability
 - Worker’s Comp
 - Vehicle (if applicable)
- Driver’s Licenses / Driver information (if applicable)
- Vehicle registration (if applicable)
- Current Land Use agreements and permits
- Participant orientation / confirmation material / equipment lists
- Guides/Administrative Manual
- Operational guidelines
- Personnel Policy
- EEO

Environmental

60. How does the organization follow Leave No Trace principles in all its practices in all program areas?
61. Describe how the organization actively educates clients on principles that minimize environmental impact.
62. Describe how the organization minimizes the visual and auditory impact to other users.
63. Describe how the organization works proactively to assist land managers on environmental issues.
64. How does the organization respect local area ethics and history?
65. How does the organization ensure that employees have a general understanding of geology, ecology, plants and wildlife?
66. How does the organization ensure that employees are familiar with hazards specific to an area (plant, critter, tide)?

Transportation / Vehicles

67. Does the organization have established transportation policies (car, van, boat, plane or helicopter)
68. Describe how vehicles are used in your program.
69. Describe how vehicles are regularly serviced and records are kept accurate.
70. Is first aid and rescue equipment available in vehicles in case of accidents?
71. Is there an adequate driver screening and training procedure? Do operators have appropriate licenses?
72. For air operations, are there written ground and landing area operations guidelines? If yes, please provide or indicate where they can be found in submitted materials.

Hiking and Camping

73. Are clear expectations set for where guide and client responsibilities start and stop? For example, does your operation handle food preparation or is the client responsible for his own food? If guide and client camp together, does the workday end with the climbing, or is the guide responsible for the client while camping?

Conclusion

74. What are the reasons for pursuing AMGA Accreditation?
75. Please list any concerns, ideas, and specific recommendations for changes to the Accreditation Program?

SUMMARY

AMGA Accreditation relies on honest self-assessment of a program's operating guidelines, access, permits, insurance, guide training, and employment and business practices. Spot field or administrative reviews will also be used occasionally to help ensure compliance with the accreditation guidelines. One advantage of the AMGA accreditation process is that a program may learn ways to improve their operations. This advantage is enhanced through open and candid participation in the process.

Once a program submits the above forms and the application fee, the Accreditation Director will start the review process. The AMGA Accreditation Director will be available as the contact for the program during this process. The AMGA will notify the program if additional documentation or clarification is required and of the accreditation decision as soon as a possible.

AMGA Accreditation is a voluntary means of quality assurance and peer evaluation focusing on international standards for guided climbing, mountaineering, and skiing. Accreditation provides the public and land managers with a consistent and meaningful standard by which to judge the reliability and professionalism of a company. AMGA accreditation provides programs with opportunities for operational improvement and advantages in marketing, access, insurance, and permitting.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

	\$1000 Accreditation Review Fee
	Completed Accreditation Self Assessment Questionnaire
	Operations/Guide/Administrative Manuals
	Copies of Commercial Use Permits (first 2 pages and signature page only)
	Copy of General Liability Insurance (first 2 pages and signature page only)
	Copy of Motor Vehicle Insurance Policy (if applicable)
	Proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance
	Copy of Current Business License
	Names and Contact Information for Applicable Land Management Agencies (email preferred)
	Names and Contact Information for Guides/Employees (email preferred)
	Copy of Printed Marketing Materials
	Copy of Release of Liability/Acknowledge of Risk Form
	Copy of Equipment Rental Form (if applicable)
	Copy of Medical Screening Form
	Sample Personnel File (sensitive personal information should be blacked out)
	Risk/Incident Management Plan