

Changes to Coach Licence Renewals

UK Athletics has changed the arrangements for renewing licences. The reasons for this and the new arrangements are explained below:

The current system

UK Athletics operates a licensing system whereby every coach is required to hold a valid licence. The licence contains a picture of the coach, some personal details and a record of coaching qualifications and professional development. Whenever a coach undertakes some professional development, this can be recorded in the licence. UKA (and other organisations) allocates credits to certain activities - particularly for attending conferences and squad activities, or for some aspect of research. Typically 1 to 4 credits are awarded for different activities; this has been done on a fairly ad hoc basis. A coach must have accumulated between 2 and 9 credits (according to level) to be entitled to renew their licence.

The system can record professional development for coaches and can potentially encourage some coaches to undertake activities that they would not otherwise do. However, it has proved unworkable in practice.

Why the system requires change

It is impossible to quantify the value of a professional development activity. The learning from such activity differs for each coach according to his/her knowledge, experience, coaching context, learning styles, motivation to learn and to a wide range of other factors.

The system has become unworkable. The scale of activity is such that monitoring every coach and giving worth to each activity is impossible. Once qualified as a coach at a particular level, there is no reason to assume that the coach is any less skilled after 1, 3 or even 5 years if they have been coaching regularly during that period.

Evidence from Australia suggests that a credit system does not increase coach commitment to professional development. Also, some coaches deliberately ceased their involvement in professional development activity in the belief that the credits system is patronising or insulting.

The changes

Coaches should be encouraged to assume responsibility for their own professional development. They should undertake activity, not because it will allow them to build up credits, but because they believe that their coaching will improve as a result.

As a result of evaluating the credits system, the following changes will apply:

1. Coach re-licensing will be dependant upon the renewal of the Disclosure Check in the relevant home country (CRB/EDS/POCVA), currently a 3 year cycle.
2. Coaches will be re-licensed automatically if:
 - a. the disclosure is 'clear'
 - b. there is no evidence that the quality of coaching delivered by that coach has declined
3. Any recorded professional development activity will be viewed as contributing to learning and qualification at the next level rather than re-qualification at the current level
4. A system for the quality assurance of coaching is being developed. This is dependent upon 2 processes: direct observation of coaching; and analysis of athlete development, performance and improvement. Once this system is in place, coach licence renewal will become dependent upon the coach being able to demonstrate competence at the appropriate level. This will be introduced in 3 phases:
 - a. Phase 1 (by 2008): Athletics Coaches who are employed directly by UKA (the responsibility of UKA)
 - b. Phase 2 (by 2009): Athletics Coaches employed by other parties (the responsibility of the employer, guided and supported by UKA and the home country federations)
 - c. Phase 3 (by 2011): Coaches who coach without remuneration (the responsibility of the club, university, school, local authority or other agency, supported by UKA and the home country federations).

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