Coach Assessor Training & Resources: A review

Functional Overview

Submitted: Friday 10th December 2010

Purpose
This document has been produced to assist the review of the Coach Assessor training and resources (the products). The main aim of the document is to:

- Provide a role-based functional overview (as per the template provided)
- Incorporate policy-related issues summarising role-based qualifications literature as appropriate.

Produced by:
Warwick Andrews

Tel: 0113 258 7458
Mob: 07749 150642
Email: warwick@waconsultancy.com
Functional Overview – Coach Assessor

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There is significant debate (still) in the similarities and differences between assessors and tutors/trainers (and teachers¹). The historical aspect stems back to the introduction of S/NVQs where employers required assessors to be able to assess competence in the work environment. Traditionally, these practitioners were not considered part of the ‘teaching’ team and provided a peripatetic function; assessing performance in the workplace only.

This type of assessment practice was prevalent in the manufacturing, process, construction and engineering industries and created a new workforce of practitioners. Recent debates and developments in vocational education has tried (without success) to integrate (competence) assessors into the teaching process and new qualifications for FE and thus there remains a divide between how a tutor/trainer/teacher assesses learning and how the work environment assessor operates.

New qualifications (e.g. CTLLS) for teachers in FE include assessing however, for the competence-based industries, these are not viewed/accepted as ‘fit for purpose’ and therefore there still remains a need for products specifically for assessors who operate in the work environment and especially when assessing competence (for NVQ-type qualifications and Apprenticeships). Hence the development of the new qualifications for assessors (based on the NOS for Learning and Development). See link below:

Assessing qualifications

Thus, the purpose of the coach assessor (as a role or individual) is impacted by this debate and also the recent changes to the standards and associated qualifications.

The purpose of the coach assessor is to assess learning and development against agreed criteria (in the vocational setting of coaching).

Policy decision?
For example, if the new teaching qualifications are considered appropriate, will someone who assesses coaches have sufficient skills and knowledge or will they need to achieve the new assessor qualifications in addition to their teaching qualification. Or, can someone gain the assessor qualification without being a teacher and thus, be used peripatetically & NOT delivering (teaching) the course?

¹ The reference to ‘teachers’ in this document relates to practitioners in post-compulsory education often described as the FE sector and includes those who deliver learning in FE Colleges, and, the delivery of provision by WBL providers and adult and community groups.
Having revisited the review documentation, two previously separate sections of the overview have been merged here as there is overlap between the two areas – internally held values / beliefs and an external output – principles (or behaviours).

As is stated within the coach educator and verifier reviews, it would not be the intent of this review of the Assessor role to teach individual values / beliefs. However, the review offers an opportunity to develop a common understanding of what values/beliefs are considered important to the quality assurance role (and also related to the educator and assessor roles).

To be consistent with the other review, it is recommended that the principles that underpin the assessor role are specifically consistent with those proposed for the coach educator review.

**The Code of Professional Practice**

The emergence of the IfL as the professional body for practitioners involved in learning offers a suitable place to adopt some principles for assessors (and the educator). The Code of Professional Practice as used by the professional body – IfL – can be seen below:

[Code of Professional Practice]

These apply to any practitioner involved in the delivery, management and quality assurance of learning and thus it is these that are recommended to be adopted for the future assessor role. If the practitioner becomes a member of the IfL, they abide by the Code; from a policy perspective (UKCC[?]), it could be advocated that the Code is utilised and followed even though its application may not be legally challenged outside of IfL membership.

It would not be the intent of this coach assessor review to teach individual values / beliefs however it does offer an opportunity to develop a common understanding of what values/beliefs are considered important to the coach assessor role. Values / beliefs are individual and influenced by many factors – previous coaching work on a coaching ‘philosophy’ have overlaps here (why you coach ... for what reasons?).

If values / beliefs are imposed, evidence suggests a lack of ownership and embedding within self, therefore, values / beliefs may be more about a common philosophy that is acknowledged for the coach assessor role.

Specifically in relation to values / beliefs, the values described in the **Professional standards** - **Domain A** of the **Professional standards** – would appear appropriate to the assessor role:

[Domain A of Professional Standards]
For the coach educator review, we described 'attributes' as qualities, skills and knowledge relating to the role. To be consistent with the proposal made for the coach educator work (and assessors are not different!), the list of qualities, skills and knowledge is recommended for this section.

Given the recent research and industry practice, it is recommended that (coach) assessors and (coach) educators are ‘treated’ the same as they are both a direct part of the learning process and therefore the learner’s experience. Their roles, functions and qualifications may be different but their qualities can be similar as they contribute to a more holistic learning process. The only major difference may relate to the technically specific aspects of assessing (subject to agreement on whether a qualified teacher can assess within the vocational environment).

**Qualities**

The list of qualities of an assessor could be endless however, these, to some extent, could be related to the values / beliefs above. Not every coach assessor will have all these qualities to the extent of others – there will be strengths and weaknesses in everyone. Thus, as long as there is a common understanding of what qualities a coach assessor may possess, and has an awareness of where their strengths and weaknesses are, the qualities can be considered as part of the assessor training and resources developments. For example:

*Qualities:* positive attitude, enthusiasm, motivated, confident, dedicated, patient, honest, empathetic.

It is suggested that you cannot be prescriptive in this aspect of the functional overview as we are dealing with people who have varying behaviours, personalities and experiences however, a common understanding of the qualities deemed appropriate for the role should be established – a little like the Code of Practice for coaching – common principles.

**Skills**

Again, the list of skills could be very long. It is recommended to avoid having a long list of ‘skills’ requirements as an overt publication. There are examples in industry where the list of skills requirements can be over-burdening and they are not used in practice and not reflected on during review (linked to appraisal processes). The types of skills that we want the assessor training and resources to develop may include:

*Skills:* e.g. assessing (as part of teaching and learning); communication (written, verbal, listening); inter-personal; problem-solving; organisational; planning; leadership; teamwork; independent work; initiative; innovation; creative.
A qualified assessor will be able to do the following:

- Address problems that, while well defined, may be complex and non-routine
- Identify, select and use appropriate skills, methods and procedures
- Use appropriate investigation to inform actions
- Review how effective methods and actions have been.

*Source: QCF Regulatory Criteria*

### Knowledge

Vocational education and training has, for some time, ‘lost’ the meaning of knowledge as the focus has been about the ability to perform a task/function. Particularly within competence-based qualifications, knowledge is essentially inferred rather than formally assessed with any rigour. This has been a real weakness of vocational qualifications in the last 10 years (accentuated by Apprenticeship frameworks) and thus, this inclusion is to emphasise that this review should ensure that assessors have appropriate knowledge and understanding that supports their role.

For the assessor knowledge, it is recommended that the *NOS for Learning and Development* be used for guidance – specifically Standard 9:

**NOS for Learning and Development**

*Examples of knowledge:* principles of assessment; assessment methods and practice; feedback methods and practice; teaching and learning practice (pedagogy); assessment for learning (initial assessment); assessment of learning; mentoring/coaching practice; support strategies; advice and guidance.

### Occupational expertise

Occupational expertise is prevalent within the assessor role – particularly for those assessing competence (and the broader vocational qualifications). Knowing what it is that you are assessing is a key function of the assessor role. Many sectors refer to their assessors (in the work environment) being *occupationally competent* to be able to make an assessment of someone’s performance in the workplace. Thus, to assess an engineer, the assessor has to be a competent engineer before they can assess if someone else is. To assess a coach, the assessor has to be a competent coach ... 

The level by which an assessor is deemed competent to assess is dictated by the sport and also SkillsActive’s requirement for ‘competent’ assessors of coaches. There is also an aspect of what level of qualification an assessor can operate if they are only competent to Level 2. Can they assess a Level 3 coach?
The key functions of the assessor, within the NOS for Learning and Development, are quite defined (one standard).

*The NOS are designed for learning and development practitioners who are involved in developing and assessing the skills, knowledge and competence of learners primarily in the workplace or in work-related programmes of learning.*

p3, NOS for Learning and Development, LLUK, 2010

Standard 9 of the NOS relates specifically to assessment practice and is part of the whole functional map of learning and development. This is in contrast to the ‘teacher’ role where all 13 standards could be applied. Thus, the key functions of the assessor can be described using standard 9 of the NOS suite. Standard 9 is about:

*... assessing learning and development against agreed criteria. It covers a range of different assessments including competence, knowledge and understanding and skills.*

One of the key drivers of the NOS review was to address the ‘isolation’ of assessment as a separate function. The previous NOS for Learning and Development had isolated assessment as a distinct skill set (the A units), not embedded within a ‘teaching’ role – this was very much influenced and accentuated by practice and policy through the 1990s for S/NVQs and work-based practitioners. The first functional map (described by Mansfield and Mitchell, 1996) integrated assessment as a function of evaluating effectiveness however, the ENTO review in 2000 created an isolated function that was not integral to teaching – you could be an assessor without being a ‘teacher’.

This issue was challenged during the development of the Professional standards where there was a greater emphasis on initial assessment and continued assessment (inc. formative methods) in the ‘teaching’ role. Hence, the new teaching qualifications have an integrated approach to assessment as part of the ‘teachers’ role. Albeit, this does create some confusion in the qualifications market.

The current practice of assessment being separate from the teaching role contradicts much of the research that suggests that assessment is an integral part of supporting learners’ achievement. Furthermore, the perception that assessment is the end activity of the teaching cycle before achievement - a threatening component of learning and development opportunities - is a perception that should be avoided.

Thus, to provide a starting point for key functions of the assessor role, the following is proposed (using the NOS):

- To ensure learners understand the purpose, requirements and processes of assessment
- To plan assessment to meet requirements and learner needs
- To use valid, fair, reliable and safe assessment methods
- To identify and collect evidence that is valid, authentic and sufficient
- To make assessment decisions against specified criteria
- To provide feedback to the learner that affirms achievement and identifies any additional requirements
• To maintain required records of the assessment process, its outcomes and learner progress
• To work with others to ensure the standardisation of assessment practice and outcomes.

Drivers for change

Assessors are considered part of the learning and development workforce albeit those who assess competence in the workplace may consider themselves to be industry assessors first before being in the learning and development workforce.

Good practice promotes the need to review, monitor and improve products throughout their lifespan. The current Coach Assessor training and resources have been in the market for approx. five years with no evident review having taken place (minor amends may have occurred in this time but would have been in-house rather than influenced by external input).

Learner experience – the current training lasts for two days and utilises a combination of classroom and sport-specific ‘simulated’ environments for its delivery. The review of the Coach Assessor products will identify (to some degree) whether sufficient time is provided to support learners in achieving the qualification (IAPS) and feedback from partners, if it can be established, will assist. A summary of the EV reports in relation to the IAPS qualification will be provided in the review documentation – wk/beg 20th September.

Sector reform – The Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector 2007-2012 is leading the reform of practitioners in the further education sector, of which assessors are included. Thus, the drive to professionalise the sector and have recognised qualifications for practitioners is one mechanism to evolve the assessor role.

Vocational qualification reform – vocational qualification (VQ) reform has been a UK-wide programme of work linked to skills policy across the UK. The major impact of this reform bill is the introduction of the QCF in England, Wales and NI (Scotland retains its existing framework and is different to the QCF). The IAPS qualification is accredited on the current NQF (to be phased out) however, to remain accredited on the new QCF, qualifications do need to go through some reform requiring technical changes to structure and content (dependent on the standards).

The Coach Assessor qualification requires support from the appropriate SSC to be accredited and this currently ‘sits’ with Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK). Part of LLUK’s remit is to support the VQ reform programme and they conduct this via their Sector Qualifications Strategy (SQS). For the LLUK SQS, see below:
Coaching industry changes – scUK have produced an SQS. The SQS is sectioned into Qualification Reform; Delivery Reform; Funding Reform, and the coach assessor training is included within this strategy as being fundamental to creating a world-leading coaching system.

The review of the UKCC (endorsement criteria) also impacts on the requirements of assessors within coach education programme and therefore the changes to the coach assessor training and qualifications will be an important aspect of its review.

Emerging and Changing role (IAPS to ?)

New assessor qualifications were approved by LLUK in March 2010 and these have a significant impact on the IAPS qualification. The new assessor qualifications were developed following an extensive review of the NOS for Learning and Development. Essentially, the new LLUK qualifications are replacements for the A1 and A2 qualifications (for competence assessment) however, the new qualifications have a different structure (knowledge and applied units) and also include other types of assessment practice for vocationally-related qualifications – a new award.


1st4sport Qualifications have confirmed that they intend to change from IAPS to one of the new awards:

QCF-Qualifications-Update2.pdf

This is a key strategic decision. The assessment unit within the CTLLS qualification is not deemed appropriate for assessors of some VRQ-type qualifications therefore, this new LLUK qualification should be considered as one of the outputs of this review process.

From the perspective of coaching, assessors will need to use a range of methods to assess coaches and therefore the implication on which qualification is achieved differs from the original 1st4sport announcement. As assessors use a range of methods, they will need to progress to the Certificate to be deemed appropriately qualified. Furthermore, the assessment strategy of coaching qualifications could be impacted by this – i.e. remove written questions for Level 1 or 2 qualifications – therefore this could reduce the requirement to achieve the Certificate.

This latter point requires further clarification between, scUK, SkillsActive and the sports to have a clear interpretation.
| **Regulations of Sector (Legislation etc)** | Funding requirements of the LSC (now SFA) stipulate that delivery of funded (SFA) provision in England requires assessors to be appropriate qualified – for NVQs, this has been the A1 qualification.

Ofqual produced an addendum to the NVQ Code in relation to assessment and this acknowledges the introduction of the new assessor qualifications.


The requirements to be qualified as an assessor have been revised and thus, assessors can achieve the new qualifications using a range of qualifications and not as previous, A1 achievement only if assessing NVQs. This relaxing of the regulations is a real opportunity to generate a more qualified assessor workforce within coaching as the current qualifications (on the QCF and NQF [requires clarification]) could be used by practitioners. |
| **Routes into Sector (Pathways etc)** | The new assessor qualifications (available from September 2010) will replace the current A1 and A2 qualifications and the newly introduced qualification for vocational achievement will provide a new pathway for assessors.

With respect to coach assessors, if sports are requiring assessors to be specifically qualified as an assessor, the route has been via the IAPS qualification; few coach assessors now take the A1 qualification as this is specific to NVQs and few sports offer NVQs. There is (anecdotally) a workforce that has achieved A1 qualifications as this was the only option available for funded provision.

Thus, it is anticipated that where sports (and other partners such as SkillsActive) make requirements for assessors to be qualified, the new qualification offered by 1st4sport Qualifications is likely to be the minimum requirement.

The unit within CTLLS does not meet the needs of many vocational qualifications (industry response) therefore, if a practitioner has gained PTLLS and/or CTLLS, it would appear that they will still be required to achieve the new qualification (subject to any agreed recognition of prior learning [RPL]).

The assessor qualifications lend themselves to a wider market, outwith coaching, and therefore it is a recommendation that this review considers how staff within LAs, Trusts and operational staff may benefit from assessor training (a two-day programme) and/or achievement of a recognised and accredited qualification.

**Work-based learning (WBL)** – As with the coach educator review, it is proposed that the review considers how the qualification / training can be delivered via a WBL mode. Common practice for the A1 and A2 qualifications was for achievement in the workplace – the new qualifications retain this mode of delivery and it is a potentially large market external to the coaching workforce. |
The assessor role, as defined in the NOS, is confined and is well understood in many other sectors (such as construction, engineering, process industries). Assessment is acknowledged as a function of ‘teaching’ however, this role of the assessor (to assess vocational practice) does warrant the introduction of the new LLUK units (and the strategy that 1st4sport Qualifications are taking).

It is recommended that this review considers how the revised training and resources can meet the needs of the new qualifications and also extend to larger markets external to ‘coach assessors’.

As assessors are considered part of the learning and development workforce (the ‘teaching’ workforce) it is recommended that the values / beliefs and the qualities, skills and knowledge of assessors is as consistent with the ‘coach educator’ review as possible. There is a technically different knowledge requirement for assessors however, the communication and interpersonal skills of the assessor are consistent with the coach educator role.

Due to the review of the related NOS and introduction of the new qualifications, the change to the IAPS qualification is inevitable. The introduction of the QCF has ‘forced’ change for some qualifications however it can be considered that this offers a prime opportunity to review the current coach assessor products.

It is to be recommended that this review enables an appropriate period of training to be offered that fulfils a number of outputs:

- Meets the endorsement criteria of the UKCC
- Provides a suitable learning opportunity for practitioners (which does not lead to the achievement of a qualification) that satisfies industry’s need for an assessor to be ‘licensed to practice’ within coach education
- Enables practitioners to progress to an accredited qualification (even towards the competence-based units if required); the new LLUK qualifications.