



**THE COACH
PRACTITIONER
PROGRAMME**

CURRICULUM GUIDE

VERSION 2026/V1

Purpose of the Curriculum Guide

The curriculum guide is designed to provide a clear and coherent overview of each course or programme within the wider coaching curriculum. Its purpose is to communicate the intentions, expectations, standards, and developmental experiences associated with a particular stage of practice. In doing so, the guide supports learners, developers, tutors, mentors, and stakeholders in understanding not only what is being developed, but why it matters and how it connects to the broader philosophy of coaching that underpins the curriculum.

Rather than functioning solely as a course handbook or list of content, the curriculum guide acts as a developmental map. It outlines the responsibilities, challenges, standards, and forms of practice that learners are expected to engage with as they progress through their coaching journey.

Relationship to the Curriculum Framework

The curriculum guide works in partnership with the wider curriculum framework. The framework establishes the overarching philosophy, principles, progression pathways, standards, and design concepts that shape the curriculum as a whole. The curriculum guide then translates these ideas into the context of a specific course or programme.

In this sense, the framework provides the strategic architecture, while the curriculum guide provides the practical interpretation of how this is enacted within a particular learning experience. Each guide therefore aligns with the broader purposes, standards, and expectations of the curriculum while responding to the unique responsibilities and developmental needs associated with that level of coaching practice.

How the Curriculum Guide Can Be Used

The curriculum guide can be used in different ways by different people across the coaching system. For learners, it provides clarity around the purpose of the programme, the standards expected, the types of learning experiences involved, and the responsibilities they are preparing to undertake. It also helps learners reflect on their current practice and identify areas for growth and development.

For tutors, mentors, and coach developers, the guide supports the design and facilitation of meaningful learning experiences aligned to the intentions of the curriculum. It can also act as a reference point for assessment, feedback, reflection, and developmental conversations. For organisations and stakeholders, the guide provides transparency regarding the aims, standards, and developmental expectations of the programme, helping ensure greater coherence and alignment across coaching environments.

The Coach Practitioner Programme

The Coach Practitioner Programme is designed to provide coaches with a challenging, supportive, and personally meaningful learning experience that aims to deepen and expand their practice. The programme will seek to develop reflective practitioners who can engage effectively and ethically with the realities and complexities of contemporary coaching.

The Coach Practitioner programme is a development programme that is social, co-created and driven by the needs of coaches. The programme experiences will support coaches to learn deeply from their own experiences through structured opportunities for dialogue, inquiry and experimentation. Coaches will move far beyond applying ideas to practice toward deeply understanding why things work and how to develop knowledge through practice.

Throughout the programme, coaches will be encouraged and supported to examine their beliefs and as their practice develops, they will increasingly cultivate their own informed standards of coaching.

Through developing habits of critical reflection, inquiry, and self-evaluation, coaches will become more self-aware practitioners who can question assumptions, explore alternative perspectives, and continually respond to the complexities of coaching.

Who is this programme for?

This programme is designed for experienced coaches who want to deepen their practice by engaging in a meaningful and substantial professional learning programme. It is particularly suited to coaches who are curious, open to new ideas, and motivated to understand not just what they do, but why it works. This programme would best suit experienced coaches who value learning with and from other coaches and are committed to self-improvement.

What coaches will experience

Throughout the programme, coaches will engage in a rich blend of integrated learning experiences shaped by the **Who-What-How** framework. They will explore the core dimensions of coaching through discussion, shared inquiry, and real-world problem-solving.

Coaches will surface the questions that matter most to them, work to investigate their problems and challenges, and participate in structured opportunities for reflection that deepen understanding. The experience is active, social, and cocreated — placing coaches at the centre of their own learning journey.

In the final phase of the programme, coaches undertake a project through which they create knowledge that benefits both themselves and the wider coaching community. This project further develops their learning skills and helps embed and embody coaching as a process of informed experimentation.

Coaching Responsibilities, Problems and Standards

This table outlines the coaching responsibilities and standards of the Coach Practitioner Programme.

Who-What-How	Coaching Responsibilities	Coaching Standards
Who	Develop a holistic (bio-psych-social) understanding of people they are working with, recognising personal histories, identities, and social contexts that shape participants' engagement in sport.	<p>The coach will use evidence informed ideas to understand why people act as they do. To understand and enhance their coaching experience.</p> <p>The coach will coach with character and moral virtues such as care empathy, fairness and integrity.</p>
Who-How	Develop meaningful, caring and reciprocal relationships and design environments that offer agency and high levels of engagement to foster a personally motivational climate.	<p>The coach will develop reciprocal relationships, where both coach and participant influence and shape one another's learning and development.</p> <p>The coach will intentionally cultivate environments where participants have agency to steer their direction in sport.</p> <p>The coach will plan and intentionally create an environment that has a high level of individual engagement.</p>
Who-What	Co-construct short, medium and long-term development plans with participants, integrating their evolving goals, constraints and aspirations.	<p>The coach will collaborate with participants to design long-term development plans that evolve over time.</p> <p>The coach will monitor progress over time and adjust to meet the dynamics of non-linear development.</p> <p>The coach will integrate participants' voices into planning and adjust plans responsively as a process of ongoing contracting with the athlete / participant.</p>
What	Acquire a substantial understanding of sport-specific technical and tactical principles and concepts to enable individual technical solutions to be created.	The coach will integrate advanced technical and tactical knowledge into practice design, modifying tasks to reflect the goals of the athlete / participant.

What-How	Experiment with pedagogical and skill acquisition ideas, concepts and frameworks to facilitate individualised learning interventions.	<p>The coach will apply and experiment with evidence informed ideas to develop a range of strategies and moves to support learners and learning.</p> <p>The coach will increasingly build their knowledge of what works for who and why.</p> <p>The coach will use strategies that promote autonomy to develop self-regulated learners.</p>
Self-context	Develop a deep personal awareness of the self, including the influence of background, biography, personal beliefs and values on practice.	The coach will engage in critically reflection to develop self-awareness and self-knowledge that will be used to understand and improve personal impact.
Effective and Ethical	Seek insights and feedback from a range of sources to refine coaching practice and maximise the athlete/participant experience and outcomes.	<p>The coach will develop increasingly sophisticated and contextually relevant coaching practice and outcomes.</p> <p>The coach will evaluate their practice to ensure a high level of participant welfare and long-term development whilst also achieving relevant and appropriate performance outcomes.</p>
Community	Contribute actively to the coaching community by sharing practice, supporting others and engaging in collaborative inquiry to enhance collective knowledge.	<p>The coach will contribute to a thriving coaching community by engaging in collaborative learning, supporting developing coaches, and participating in shared problem-solving.</p> <p>The coach will help lead and shape a coherent, values driven coaching successful programme.</p>

Coach Practitioner Programme Overview

Duration: 12 months

Discipline: The practitioner programme is sport / discipline specific

Learners: Up to 12 learners

Coach Educator: Typically, one coach educator will facilitate the course, but many more people are involved in supporting learning.

Cohort: Two cohorts of the programme are delivered per year – one starting in January and the other in September.

Learning hours: 180 – 220 hours

Levelling - for illustration purposes only

The Coach Practitioner programme is a **non-regulated qualification** that is notionally benchmarked against the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) at Level 4, with several learning outcomes and assessment features aligned to Level 5.

The programme requires learners to integrate theory with practice, analyse complex coaching environments, engage in critical reflection, and demonstrate autonomous professional judgement. With 180–220 guided learning hours and a project-based inquiry component, the programme aligns with the expectations of higher education certificate-level study.

Programme modules

The practitioner programme involves 5 modules inquiring about the **Who-What-How** of coaching

- Who am I and where am I coaching?
- Who am I coaching?
- What am I coaching?
- How am I coaching?
- A coaching project

Programme Structure

	January cohort	September cohort					
Phase 1	January	September	Who am I and where am I coaching?	Who am I coaching	Learning Event 1 (2 day)		
	February	October				Learning Tasks (self-directed)	1:1 Professional Conversation
	March	November			Sense-making (online)		
Phase 2	April	December	What am I coaching?	How am I coaching	Learning Event 2 (2 day)		
	May	January				Learning Tasks (self-directed)	1:1 Professional Conversation
	June	February			Sense-making (online)		
Phase 3	July	March	Coaching project		Learning Event 3 (1 day)		
	August	April				Drop-in support session (online)	1:1 Professional Conversation
	September	May			Sense-making (online)		
	October	June				Drop-in support session (online)	
	November	July				Drop-in support session (online)	
	December	August			Final Learning Event (1 day)		

Programme learning activities explained

Learning Activity	Description
Introduction	The introduction will set the scene and direction for the programme - how people will work and what they will work on. A key part of the introduction will ensure learners understand how the standards will be used to support learning and assessment.
Learning Events	The learning events will explore areas of coaching, working to gain new insights and curiosity to drive learning through practice. Questions and inquiry will stimulate reflection, and ideas will be offered 'just in time' to meet the questions and practical problems that are emerging for the coaches.
Learning Tasks	Learning Tasks are practical opportunities to experiment with ideas in practice. The objective is to develop coaching strategies informed by theory and crafted through practice. Learning tasks will produce evidence that will contribute to achieving the curriculum standards.
Sense-making sessions	Sense making offers the opportunity for coaches to share and unpack their experiences of coaching, to explore different perspectives and meanings.
1:1 Professional conversations	A professional conversation is a purposeful individual dialogue with a Coach Educator. They will discuss and negotiate the coach's practice through the lens of the coaching standards, generating feedback for the coach to act on.
Project	The project will be focused on a practical coaching 'problem' and will generate something substantial for the coach. Project-based learning deepens understanding by engaging learners in meaningful, real-world tasks that integrate knowledge, skills, and reflection. The submission of the project is not <i>the</i> assessment but the rather the process of working towards the project will contribute towards achieving the curriculum standards.
Project drop-in sessions	Drop-in sessions support coaches with their project.
Final learning Event	The final learning event is an important part of the programme as it offers coaches an opportunity to take stock and reflect on the journey they have been on - who they are and how they have changed. It is also an opportunity to share their work and contribute knowledge to the wider community.

Programme Learning Hours

Learning Activity	Mode	Volume & Frequency	Total time (h)
E-introduction	Online asynchronous	0	0.5
Online Introduction	Online synchronous	One session	2
Learning Events	In person live	5 F2F learning days total 2 x 2-day events 1 x 1-day event	35
Sense-making Session	Online synchronous	3 x 2-hours session	6
Learning Tasks	Completed in the coaches own learning environment	n/a	30-50
Professional conversations	Online synchronous	3 x 1-hour sessions	3
E-learning	Online asynchronous	5 modules	10-30
Project	Self-directed	n/a	80 - 100
Project drop in sessions	Online synchronous	3 x 1.5 hours sessions	4.5
Final learning event	In person live	One session / day	5
Total learning time			180-220 hours

Assessment as learning

By positioning assessment as a process that supports learning, rather than as a final judgement of competence, the course seeks to promote curiosity, reflection, and growth. This approach reduces the pressure on learners to simply demonstrate that they are “right” by avoiding mistakes or uncertainty. Instead, learners are encouraged to engage openly with the standards as a stimulus for action and reflection.

Each aspect of the curriculum provides opportunities for learners to reflect on their coaching and appraise their practice in relation to the course standards, thus generating meaningful self-feedback. Through this ongoing process of reflection and appraisal – supported by the Coach Educator – learners will deepen their understanding and continue to raise their own coaching standards.

E-Learning

There are five e-learning modules associated with the Coach Practitioner Programme. Each module supports the coaching responsibilities in different ways, and engagement with the modules contributes to learners' progress towards the coaching standards.

The e-learning is designed to complement and support the wider curriculum rather than function as a standalone learning experience. In this sense, the modules act as a stimulus for learning by introducing information, ideas, perspectives, and language that can support understanding and reflection. These ideas are then explored, applied, and reflected upon within the broader learning experiences provided throughout the programme.

Module	Description	Standard
Ethics 2	This module deepens coaches' understanding of ethical practice by exploring how character, virtues, and professional judgement shape decision-making in complex environments. Through rich, scenario-based challenges, coaches will analyse ambiguous situations, evaluate competing priorities, and develop strategies for upholding ethical standards.	Effective and Ethical
Planning 2	This module extends foundational planning skills into long-term, strategic coaching design. Coaches will learn how to build integrated season long plans, align objectives across multiple phases of development, and adapt planning frameworks to meet athlete's needs. Emphasis is placed on designing flexible, evidence informed plans that support sustained progression and performance.	Who-What What-How
Technical Skills 2	This module develops an advanced understanding of skill, exploring the principles that underpin effective movement. Coaches will learn to identify the key performance constraints, recognise the principles most relevant to each athlete's needs, and design optimal, personalised solutions. By working at the level of principles rather than isolated techniques, coaches will develop the capability to adapt, refine, and cocreate skill development approaches that support long-term performance.	What
Training & Periodisation 2	This module advances coaches' understanding of training theory and periodisation by examining how to design, sequence, and adjust training programmes for long-term athlete development and performance. Coaches will explore advanced concepts such as load management, tapering, peaking, and monitoring, learning how to integrate scientific principles with the realities of their coaching environment.	What
Physiology 2	This module deepens knowledge of exercise physiology by examining how the body responds and adapts to different types of training stress. Coaches will explore energy systems, fatigue mechanisms, recovery strategies, and adaptation pathways, learning how to apply physiological principles to optimise training design, support athlete wellbeing, and enhance performance over time.	What

Glossary

Curriculum – A curriculum is the totality of the learning experiences available to learners.

Pedagogy – The methods and approaches used to teach and support learning effectively.

Social Practice – The ways in which coaches interact with athletes, peers, and the wider community i.e. the relational component of coaching

Ethical Practice – Acting with character and following professional standards to protect, support and treat people with respect and integrity.

Coherent planning – Designing sessions so objectives, content, and activities are logically connected to support clear learning outcomes.

Coach Decision Making – The process by which a coach assesses situations and chooses actions to support athlete learning, performance, and wellbeing.

Motivational Climate – The learning or coaching environment created by a coach that influences athletes' motivation, engagement, and effort.

Reciprocal Relationships – Connections in which coaches and athletes mutually influence, support, and learn from each other.

Reflective Conversations – Dialogues in which coaches and learners discuss experiences, explore thinking, and draw insights to improve practice -

Skill Acquisition – The process through which athletes develop, refine, and consolidate physical, technical, or cognitive abilities over time.

Scenario-Based Learning – A learning approach where coaches engage with realistic situations to practice decision-making, problem-solving, and applying knowledge in context.

Mastery-Focused Environment – A learning setting that emphasises personal improvement, effort, and skill development rather than comparison or competition with others.

Technical Skills – The specific sport-related abilities and techniques that athletes need to perform effectively.

Coaching Context – The specific environment, setting, or group in which coaching takes place, including factors such as age, ability, goals, and culture.

Domains of Coaching – The specific type of coaching such as children, adult, age –group, performance development, performance, participation etc.

Online Asynchronous – Learning that takes place online at the learner's own pace and time, without real-time interaction with instructors or peers.

Online Synchronous – Learning that takes place online in real time, with live interaction between instructors and learners. □

Contact points

T: 01509 640 493

E: info@swimenglandqualifications.com

W: swimenglandqualifications.com

Head office address

Swim England Qualifications
Pavilion 3
SportPark
3 Oakwood Drive
Loughborough University
LE11 3QF

Copyright

All rights reserved. The content of this publication is, unless otherwise indicated, © of Swim England and may not be reproduced, translated or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior permission obtained in writing from Swim England.

Publication

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this publication is true and correct at the time of publishing. However, Swim England Qualifications products and services are subject to continuous development and improvement, and the right is reserved to change these products and services from time to time. Swim England Qualifications cannot accept liability for the loss or damage arising from the use of information in this publication.



Pavilion 3, SportPark, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough University Leicestershire LE11 3QF
Tel: **01509 640493** | swimenglandqualifications.com | info@swimenglandqualifications.com



Swimming Qualifications



@SE_Quals



swimengland