



INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACH EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT

SPEAR is part of
Canterbury Christ Church University

SPEAR
SPORT, PHYSICAL EDUCATION
& ACTIVITY RESEARCH



INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACH EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT

Commissioned from: Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR)
Canterbury Christ Church University

Commissioned by: UK Sport

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FOREWORD FROM UK SPORT

In addition to its work in high performance sport and major events, UK Sport works in partnership with national sporting bodies, international federations, governments and non-governmental organisations to support sport development initiatives in over 30 countries around the world. We also advocate for wider access to inclusive, high quality sport and physical education worldwide.

In our international work one of the most successful interventions is sport workforce development, specifically supporting and developing coach education systems. In doing this work we have seen that, to a large extent, coaches in both developed and developing nations prefer to learn non-formally and informally - but that there are no systems of recognising, validating and accrediting such learning.

It was against this background that we commissioned the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) at Canterbury Christ Church University to review the literature that exists - internationally and across sectors – about informal and non-formal learning, and to consult with some of our partner governing bodies in the UK about their own practice or future plans in this respect. As a result of their investigations, SPEAR has developed a six-stage model process that the team proposes could be used to accredit the informal and non-formal learning of coaches seeking coaching qualifications. We at UK Sport have endorsed the model and believe it is capable of making a valuable contribution not only in an international context but domestically as well.

We are publishing the research and the model openly and without restrictions because we would like to see organisations for whom it might be relevant embracing and using it. In addition to this full report of the model and the research that underpins it, a shorter document outlining the model and its potential use is also openly available¹. While we recognise it is unlikely that anyone will want to implement the model in its entirety, we hope that organisations will adopt it where they can but at the same time adapt it to meet their needs. Internationally, we will be looking to promote the model with a range of partners, taking into account local circumstances and thinking about the potential scenarios that SPEAR has identified for this purpose. At home, several governing bodies have already expressed an interest in piloting the model and we are currently looking to see how best we can support them in this regard.

Our thanks are due to SPEAR for having embraced a tricky brief with enthusiasm and imagination, and to all those governing body staff who contributed their time and expertise so generously to the consultation phase.

Jerry Bingham
Research Manager
UK Sport
January 2016

¹ See [\[UK Sport web address for SUMMARY DOCUMENT to be added here\]](#)

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HEADLINE FINDINGS

RESEARCH OUTCOME

- The primary outcome informed by and derived from the research is a *Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching*.
 - The model process has six stages and is intended to be used to accredit the informal and non-formal learning of candidates seeking coaching qualifications.
 - Both accreditation for prior informal and non-formal learning, and planning for accreditation of future informal and non-formal learning, are accommodated in the model process.
 - The processes of accrediting prior and future learning can be used independently. However, the processes are compatible and can be used simultaneously, or in conjunction with accreditation of more formal learning.
-

THE SCOPE OF INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

- There is an increasing motivation domestically and internationally to develop mechanisms whereby informal and non-formal learning can be recognised, validated and accredited.
 - Within the UK, there is no legal framework for validating informal and non-formal learning. The various national qualifications frameworks determine regulatory arrangements and implementation is usually devolved to qualification awarding bodies.
 - Peer reviewed literature in sport coaching is limited in scope and rarely examines either the impact of informal and non-formal learning or systems to implement it.
 - In practice, assessment of informal and non-formal learning can be both formative and summative. There are examples of both of these uses available from other sectors that can be applied to sport.
 - Although limited in number, current coach education practice provides some examples whereby informal and non-formal learning is being recognised, and sometimes accredited.
-

SYSTEMS FOR VALIDATING AND ACCREDITING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

- Four key systems can be identified as central to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning: information and guidance; support systems; assessment systems; and quality assurance.

- The four systems should be underpinned by quality indicators identified in European guidelines: reliability and validity; safety, security and confidentiality; standards/referential; visibility/transparency; fitness for purpose; and cost efficiency.
 - Examples of good practice from other sectors are available and can be applied in the sport coaching environment.
-

IMPLEMENTING SYSTEMS TO VALIDATE AND ACCREDIT INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACHING

- Consultation with NGBs suggest that the four key systems to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning – information and guidance, support systems, assessment systems and quality assurance – can be adapted and adopted for use in sport coach education.
 - Key concerns and challenges include: ensuring systems are not too onerous for the learner; effecting a culture change to consider sport coach education to be a learning journey rather than a qualification collection exercise; the delivery of effective and efficient systems within a cost-effective funding model.
 - Key enablers to implementing systems within sport coaching include: helping learners to understand if they are an appropriate candidate for qualification by informal or non-formal learning; the development of an effective mentor workforce; providing assessment opportunities relevant to both the learner and the coaching environment; ensuring assessors have the skillset to assess evidence of informal and non-formal learning.
-

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

- The *Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching* has been developed to be flexible enough to be used across a range of contexts, including international development.
 - A key question for the international context is which organisation's coaching qualifications are offered, as this is likely to determine which organisation or body accredits learning and manages the process of accreditation.
 - Other key questions include: where will the stages of the process be delivered? what evidence will be available for assessment? who will provide and train the workforce of mentors and assessors? how will quality assurance take place, and who will be responsible for it?
-

A. RESEARCH OUTCOME

A MODEL PROCESS FOR ACCREDITING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACHING

In November 2014, UK Sport commissioned the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) at Canterbury Christ Church University to undertake research to explore how informal and non-formal learning might be validated and accredited in sport coaching. In doing so, SPEAR has explored: the scope of informal and non-formal learning in Europe and the UK in a wide range of sectors including sport; systems for validating and accrediting informal and non-formal learning; and the implementation of systems to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning in sport coaching. The findings of this research are described in the substantive sections of the report that follow. However, in this section the primary outcome informed by and derived from the research is presented: *A Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching* (see Figure A1).

The model process is intended to be used to accredit the informal and non-formal learning of candidates seeking coaching qualifications. The process recognises that candidates may be seeking accreditation for prior informal and non-formal learning, and/or to plan for accreditation of future informal and non-formal learning. In the case of prior learning, the learning period will largely, if not entirely, have been completed before the accreditation process begins. Prior learning might be that which has been certificated (such as attendance at a workshop), or that which has been acquired through experience, or may be a combination of the two. In the case of future learning, the learning period is embedded within the accreditation process, and is proactively planned at the start of the process.

Whilst the processes of accrediting prior and future learning can be used independently, the processes are compatible and can be used simultaneously, or in conjunction with accreditation of more formal learning. For example, a candidate may seek accreditation for prior informal and non-formal learning that partially fulfils the requirements for a qualification, and plan to achieve accreditation for the remaining requirements through future learning, some of which may be informal and non-formal and some of which may be formal.

The process comprises six stages of no pre-defined time-scale. The stages are common to both accrediting prior learning and planning for the accreditation of future learning, although the activities that take place at each stage may differ.

The first stage concerns raising awareness among potential candidates that a process for accrediting informal and non-formal learning exists, and the provision of information and guidance about how candidates may use the process for either prior or future learning, or both.

For prior learning, candidates will use stage two, the pre-assessment stage, to collect, collate and prepare the evidence of their informal and non-formal learning for submission

for assessment. This should be a supported stage in the process in which candidates are provided with further guidance regarding: the types of activities that they may have engaged with that may have supported learning; the ways in which they can evidence learning; and the best ways to present evidence of their learning. In stage three, the assessment stage, the evidence submitted by candidates is assessed, and any further assessment required (such as practical observation) is undertaken. Stage four provides feedback to candidates regarding the credit that can be given, or the award that can be made, for prior learning.

For future learning, candidates plan how they can achieve the learning outcomes required for accreditation through informal and non-formal learning at the pre-assessment stage (stage two). Such future informal and non-formal learning may be planned to take place alongside more formal learning opportunities, or candidates may plan for accreditation on the basis of informal or non-formal learning alone. Stage two should be a supported stage, in which guidance is provided regarding the most suitable methods and activities to achieve learning outcomes, and how to document and evidence learning. The learning period itself then takes place across stages three and four, and involves a continuous cycle of assessment and feedback throughout the learning period, rather than being a single final assessment point with subsequent feedback on outcomes.

At the end of both the prior and future learning processes, the awarding of credit (stage 5) and the appeals process (stage 6) should be applied in the same way.

Details and examples of the activities and evidence that might be required at each stage of the process are provided in Figure A2.

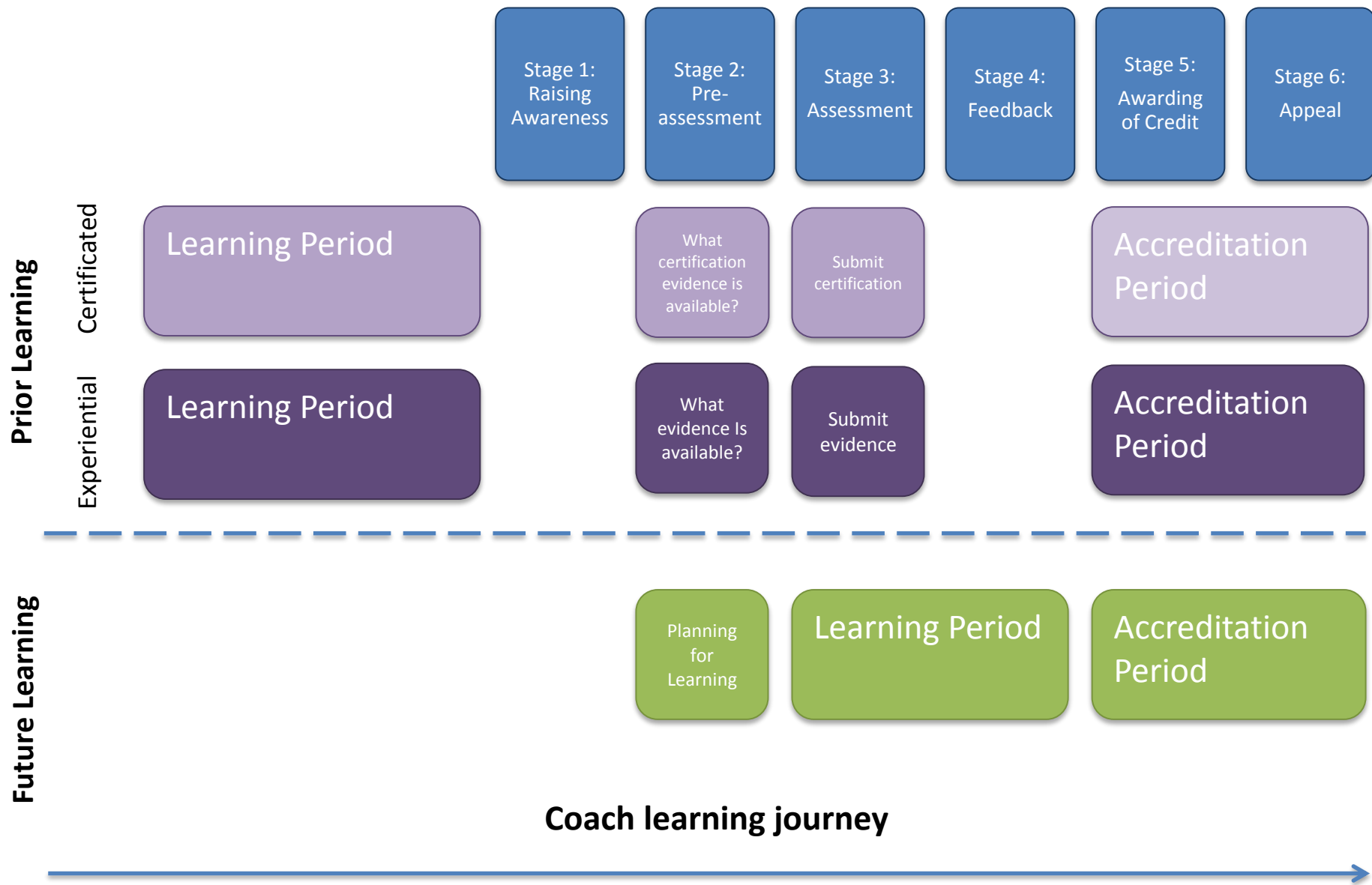


FIGURE A1: A Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching

Stage 1:
Raising
Awareness

Raising awareness includes providing information to candidates about the processes associated with how their informal and non-formal learning can be accredited. Sufficient guidance at this stage should allow candidates to decide if they have sufficient prior learning for accreditation, or if they should plan for accreditation of future informal and non-formal, or formal, learning.

Information provided to the candidate may include:

- What it means to have their informal and non-formal learning accredited.
- The differences between having prior learning and future learning accredited.
- The stages of the process and associated timelines for each activity.
- The likely costs of the process.
- What support will be available to the learner throughout the process.
- The scope of learning activities that may be considered for learning to be accredited.
- The types of evidence that can support the learning achieved.

Options for dissemination of this information include:

- Website information.
- Inclusion in course materials.
- Specific marketing materials.
- Hosting information sessions.

PRIOR LEARNING: Support for candidates wishing to have their prior learning accredited at this stage may include guidance towards self-assessment of the learning they have already achieved.

Options for this assessment include;

- One to one guidance (in person, via email or phone).
- Providing self-assessment documentation.
- Providing a self-assessment tool.
- Providing a self-assessment workshop/module.

FUTURE LEARNING: For candidates that do not wish to have prior learning assessed at this stage, guidance should be directed at how future informal and non-formal learning could be used to meet the requirements of their qualifications.

FIGURE A2: Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching

Stage 2:
Pre-
assessment

PRIOR LEARNING: During the pre-assessment phase candidates will be putting together evidence of their learning.

Guidance throughout this stage should include:

- The stages of the process and the timeline for each activity.
- The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process.
- The evidence that can be used to support learning.
- How to present the evidence.

FUTURE LEARNING: During the pre-assessment phase candidates will be planning how they might utilise informal and non-formal learning opportunities to meet the requirements of their qualification. Guidance at this stage should include:

- What types of activities might be undertaken.
- What type of evidence might be accumulated to document learning.
- How to present that evidence.

Options for providing this guidance include;

- Face to face meetings.
- Web based interaction (email, skype, virtual learning platform).
- Self-assessment documentation.
- Delivered module/workshop.

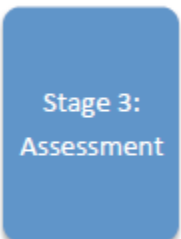
Example activities

- Observing a coach/coaching sessions.
- Professional discussion with a coach/coaches.
- Planning coaching sessions.
- Delivering coaching sessions.
- Evaluating coaching sessions.
- Attending non-formal coaching workshops/seminars.
- Reading coaching (or other related) materials (websites, journal articles).
- Engaging in coaching networks.

Example Evidence

- Letters of recommendation & 3rd party testimony.
- Session plans and other session planning documents.
- Certification of attendance/other awards.
- Reflective accounts.
- Needs analysis documents.
- Procedures/policy documents written by the candidate.
- Videos of coaching sessions.
- Recordings of conversations.
- Risk assessments conducted.
- References/Performance appraisals.
- Evaluation forms.
- CV.

FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching



Stage 3:
Assessment

PRIOR LEARNING: During the assessment phase, assessors should review and judge the evidence supplied by the candidate and decide if this evidence meets the requirements of the qualification. Appropriate recording of the process and decision should be made.

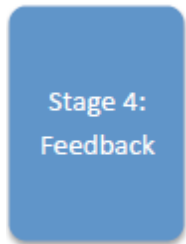
FUTURE LEARNING: During the assessment phase, candidates should be provided with ongoing assessment whilst they accumulate the learning outcomes of the qualification.

Assessment methods might include;

- Reviewing collected evidence.
- Observation of the candidate.
- Simulated role play of coaching activities.
- Written test or examination.
- Oral test or examination.
- Interview or professional discussion.

Assessment procedures should meet the requirement of the quality assurance systems used in the assessment of formal learning pathways.

FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching



Stage 4:
Feedback

PRIOR LEARNING: Feedback as to the results of the assessment should be provided to the learner. The decision whether or not any of the prior learning identified by the candidate can be accredited should be communicated.

Options for disseminating feedback include;

- Written statement of the results of the assessment.
- Face to face discussion.
- Web based communication; (email, skype, virtual learning environment).

For unsuccessful learners, guidance should be provided as to how they can engage with other learning opportunities, and how they can evidence these for future accreditation.

FUTURE LEARNING: For learners who are receiving ongoing assessment and feedback, this will be a continual process as they meet the learning outcomes for the qualification. Feedback should include planning with the candidate how they can continue to meet learning outcomes, and where they have been unsuccessful, what they need to do to improve. If candidates provide all of this work for assessment in one single submission (which would not be good practice), the feedback guidelines as above apply.

FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching

Stage 5:
Awarding of
Credit

PRIOR LEARNING & FUTURE LEARNING: Awarding credit should be conducted in the same way as for formal learning processes, which will vary between awarding bodies. The learning outcomes/units accredited should be documented in the same way as formal learning processes.

Stage 6:
Appeal

PRIOR LEARNING & FUTURE LEARNING: Should a candidate wish to appeal a decision, there should be sufficient guidance provided to enable this. This should be in accordance with appeals procedures applied to formal learning, and guidance may include:

- Information on the appeals process.
- A designated point of contact.
- Grounds for appeal.

FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching

1. INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH CONTEXT

Coach education has been recognised as an important vehicle through which to improve coaching practice. Although coaching knowledge has traditionally been accredited through attendance at formal learning activities to achieve coaching qualifications, it is increasingly recognised that informal and non-formal learning opportunities form an important part of coach learning. It is also recognised that access to qualifications and other formal learning opportunities may be limited for some coaches in some contexts, particularly internationally where coaching frameworks may be still under development.

Both domestically and internationally across a range of sectors there is much evidence to suggest that there is a significant motivation to improve the ways in which informal and non-formal learning can be recognised, validated and accredited. This aligns with the desire of the sport coaching sector to develop its own practices. The development of frameworks of validation for such learning has received significant attention across Europe in the last decade². On a broader international stage, the UNESCO institute for lifelong learning operates a specific cluster dedicated to lifelong learning, specifically addressing the issue of the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of informal and non-formal learning³. The aim of this body is to conduct and disseminate research and practice on RVA on an international scale, and one specific arm of this project includes the Africa Network designed to strengthen partnerships as well as 'provide access to key stakeholders and the general public to cutting-edge research, latest orientations and innovations in RVA'.

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (SPEAR) was commissioned in November 2014 to undertake research examining informal and non-formal learning in coach education. This research comprised: a documentary review including research activity and policy and practice documents across a range of sectors, including sport; a consultation phase with selected sport national governing bodies, including telephone interviews; and a workshop and follow up consultation on the workshop findings. The research methods and sources used are outlined in Table 1.1 below and are discussed in greater detail in Appendix I.

This report details the findings from these research phases and is now presented in four further substantive sections. Section two, which follows this introduction, identifies the scope of informal and non-formal learning drawing from various sectors, and with specific relevance to coaching practice. Section three highlights important systems that should feature in accreditation processes, again by drawing from relevant examples across different sectors and providing case examples where relevant. Section four details the specific issues surrounding the implementation of these systems in sport, drawing from the consultations with sport NGBs. Finally, section five addresses questions for consideration when applying an accreditation process within the international development context.

² http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054_en.pdf

³ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001830/183020e.pdf>

TABLE 1.1: Summary of Research Approach

| | Research | Sources |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Documentary Review | Update to peer reviewed research examining informal and non-formal learning in sport coaching | 62 peer reviewed, English language, journal articles dated 2009- 2014. |
| | Documentary review of policy and practice | European Guidelines for the validation of informal and non-formal learning (2009) and associated country inventories from 2009 & 2014. |
| | | Sector specific research and practice documents referring to sector specific practice examples |
| NGB consultation** | Telephone interviews with national governing bodies examining current practice | 16 NGBs* |
| | 2 workshops with national governing body representatives to discuss key systems for accrediting non-formal and informal learning | Representatives from 8 NGBs and from Sport England, the EIS and UK Sport. |
| | Follow up consultation with NGBs detailing good practice principles | 16 NGBs consulted |

* Specific details regarding participants and methods of the consultation phase can be found at Appendix I

** The consultation document can be found at Appendix II

2. THE SCOPE OF INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

HEADLINES

- **There is an increasing motivation domestically and internationally to develop mechanisms whereby informal and non-formal learning can be recognised, validated and accredited.**
 - **Within the UK, there is no legal framework for validating informal and non-formal learning. The various national qualifications frameworks determine regulatory arrangements and implementation is usually devolved to qualification awarding bodies.**
 - **Peer reviewed literature in sport coaching is limited in scope and rarely examines either the impact of informal and non-formal learning or systems to implement it.**
 - **In practice, assessment of informal and non-formal learning can be both formative and summative. There are examples of both of these uses available from other sectors that can be applied to sport.**
 - **Although limited in number, current coach education practice provides some examples whereby informal and non-formal learning is being recognised, and sometimes accredited.**
-

The purpose of this section is to address the scope of informal and non-formal learning. This includes a discussion of the existing policy landscape for informal and non-formal learning domestically and in Europe, and examples of areas where the recognition, validation and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning are being applied. The definitions for each form of learning are presented and the differences between using informal and non-formal learning as both a retrospective and prospective activity are described.

2.1 Defining formal, informal and non-formal learning

Although definitions and terminology describing these different learning approaches vary, typically learning can be divided into formal learning, informal learning, and non-formal learning. For the purpose of this report, the following definitions provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)⁴ will be used.

- ***Formal learning is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner's standpoint, it is always intentional: i.e. the learner's explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences. Typical examples are learning that takes place within the initial education and training system or workplace training arranged by the employer. One can also speak about formal education and/or training or, more accurately speaking, education and/or training in a formal setting. This definition is rather consensual.***

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>

- **Informal learning is never organised, has no set objective in terms of learning outcomes and is never intentional from the learner's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience.** The idea is that the simple fact of existing constantly exposes the individual to learning situations, at work, at home or during leisure time for instance. This definition, with a few exceptions (see Werquin, 2007⁵) also meets with a fair degree of consensus.
- Mid-way between the first two, **non-formal learning** is the concept on which there is the least consensus, which is not to say that there is consensus on the other two, simply that the wide variety of approaches in this case makes consensus even more difficult. **Nevertheless, for the majority of authors, it seems clear that non-formal learning is rather organised and can have learning objectives.** The advantage of the intermediate concept lies in the fact that such learning may occur at the initiative of the individual but also happens as a by-product of more organised activities, whether or not the activities themselves have learning objectives. In some countries, the entire sector of adult learning falls under non-formal learning; in others, most adult learning is formal. Non-formal learning therefore gives some flexibility between formal and informal learning, which must be strictly defined to be operational, by being mutually exclusive, and avoid overlap.

2.2 The EU and UK policy landscape for informal and non-formal learning

Although traditionally learning has been viewed as a 'classroom' activity that takes place in established, structured and formally organised settings, it is widely accepted that there is valuable learning to be achieved outside of these environments. Increasingly, practitioners and policy makers are engaging in ways to recognise, validate and accredit these learning experiences in order to benefit the development of a lifelong learning framework⁶. The development of common European principles regarding validation adopted by the European Council in 2004 is indicative of the European agenda to diversify and expand upon traditional formal routes to qualifications. In 2009 a set of guidelines that build upon the exchange of validation information across more than 20 countries were published as a tool kit to encourage the development of validation systems, and regular inventory updates detailing the progress of its various member states have been provided. In the latest version of the inventory (2014), one of the most important developments relates to the adoption of Council recommendations regarding the validation of informal and non-formal learning in December 2012. The report states: *"The Recommendation calls for Member States to put in place, by no later than 2018, arrangements to enable individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competences acquired via non-formal and informal learning validated, and to be able to obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences"*. With this in mind, this latest inventory demonstrates an increasing trend towards the creation of national validation systems, though it recognizes more work is needed to develop practical validation arrangements. Similarly, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has worked to understand and develop validation systems on a wider international scale.

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/41834711.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>

Unlike many European counterparts, the UK currently has no national strategy in place for the validation of informal and non-formal learning, and no legal framework covering validation. The lack of national strategy and legal obligation to recognise prior learning results in a more devolved approach and means the learner does not have the legal right to have their informal and non-formal learning recognised as they do in some other countries. Within the UK, regulatory arrangements for validating informal and non-formal learning at the national level are determined by each country's national qualifications framework: the QCF (Qualifications and Credit Framework; England and Northern Ireland); the SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework; Scotland); and the CQFW Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales; Wales).

Although operating under different qualification frameworks, there are similarities between the countries of the UK in both the provision for, and current application of, the recognition of prior learning (RPL), which is where the majority of attention concerning informal and non-formal learning has been directed. Uptake of RPL generally is fairly low and some common areas to address this include awareness raising and support for the practitioners implementing RPL processes. Importantly, each qualification system offers the means to recognise informal and non-formal learning, although the implementation of this is usually devolved to awarding bodies or organisations. In terms of sport coaching, those coaching qualifications that are recognised by a national qualifications framework would be subject to the regulations and guidance of the awarding bodies with which they are associated.

2.3 Informal and non-formal learning in coach education – a brief review of the literature

There is increasing recognition that learning how to coach occurs through a number of different mechanisms, including formal coach education programs as well as informal and non-formal experiences, and that the path to becoming a coach is often idiosyncratic.⁷ Much of the discussion around the role of informal and non-formal learning in coaching is provided by academic literature. In 2010 Sports Coach UK⁸ conducted a review of coach learning, suggesting that whilst informal and non-formal processes play an important role in coach learning, the field of coach learning more broadly does not contain enough empirical evidence on the effects of such learning on performance or coaching practice.

As an update to the Sports Coach UK review, SPEAR conducted a review of literature from 2009-2014 focusing specifically on informal and non-formal learning. The key findings, derived from 62 sources, are listed below (more detailed results and methods can be found in Appendix III):

- *Consistent with previous reports many of the studies demonstrate that coaching knowledge is derived from a balance of formal, informal, and non-formal learning.*
- *Again consistent with previous reports, the literature highlights that coaches suggest that they recognise and ascribe value to non-formal and informal learning opportunities, particularly episodic learning experiences and experiential learning.*

⁷ Werthner, P., & Trudel, P. (2006). A New Theoretical Perspective for Understanding How Coaches Learn to Coach. *The Sport Psychologist*, 20, 198–212.

⁸ <http://www.sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Coach---Learning---and---Dev---Review.pdf>

- *Different learning methods might be suitable for different career stages. For example, one study demonstrated that more informal learning was used when already in a coaching role.*
- *Of the small amount of studies that address assessment, a number of feasible assessment methods are suggested such as video evidence of coaching practice, leading group seminars and video conferencing. However, it is highlighted that for assessment to be effective, the efficacy of assessment methods should be further explored.*
- *Previous athletic experiences appear to form a major part of what is recognised as prior informal or non-formal learning. It is suggested this can generate important social capital for ex-athletes looking for coaching work/development.*
- *There is an increase in empirical studies using coaches as participants; however there is a limited representation of quantitative or experimental designs.*
- *The outcomes of informal and non-formal coach education have received little attention, with the exception of one systematic review examining the impact of non-formal coach education on interpersonal relationships with athletes. However this review highlights a paucity of research literature on this topic.*

2.4 Informal and non-formal learning in practice

The use of informal and non-formal learning may be considered as both a retrospective activity and prospective activity. From a retrospective perspective, the learning already accumulated from informal and non-formal activities might be recognised and accredited as contributing to an award or qualification. Alternatively, from a prospective perspective the use of informal and non-formal learning opportunities might be considered as part of the ongoing learning journey whereby an individual might plan how these opportunities might develop their future learning. These activities are more commonly described in literature as formative (prospective) and summative (retrospective) approaches, and across the course of a learning journey they may be used in conjunction with one another.

In this vein, the European guidelines suggest that validation frameworks should take into account the differences between formative and summative validation. Whilst formative assessment may be used to identify key aspects of experience and learning for ongoing engagement, they suggest summative assessment must have 'clearly defined and unambiguous' links to the national qualifications system or framework to which accreditation is relevant. Although the European guidelines do not suggest that formative assessment leads to the formal accreditation of outcomes, its ability to identify skills sets, provide feedback to the learner and to identify appropriate developmental avenues for the learner is purposeful. In contrast, the European guidelines suggest that summative assessment should be applied when the certification (or accreditation) of the learning is required, thus it should be linked and integrated into those institutions and bodies that award qualifications.

Formative assessment is a common feature of validation practices in the third sector in the UK. A compendium⁹ examining practices across the third sector in 2007 identifies a number of key elements of good practice including using competence based methodologies that are flexible enough to account for the wide variety of needs in this sector, working in partnerships and identifying relevant stakeholders and policy makers, and the learning/sharing of information and practice. Box 2.1 provides an example of a third sector project taken from the UK Inventory (2010)¹⁰

BOX 2.1: The SOUL Record

The Soft Outcomes Universal Learning (SOUL) Record is used to evidence learning in the voluntary and community sector. It was initially developed in 2003 by a partnership of voluntary organisations in Norfolk, with support from the Big Lottery Fund. Voluntary Norfolk led the project and worked together with the Research Centre at City College Norwich to undertake a research project to develop a system to monitor and measure progression in 'soft' outcomes. The resulting tool not only supports learners but also supports third sector organisations to evidence the outcomes of their work.

The SOUL Record can be used to measure progression in soft outcomes and informal learning, such as increases in confidence, self-esteem and motivation. It is made up of sections which are relevant for adults, children and young people.

The toolkit is available online and is supported by the provision of user training and also training for trainers – all staff wanting to use the record must take an initial training course which costs around EUR 6,500.

Since its launch in 2006, over 600 users from across the UK have been trained. The toolkit can also be used for RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Nonaccredited Learning). The toolkit has also been translated into Polish and Portuguese.

Formative assessment is also a common feature in the private sector in the UK, and is often used in order to support career development and develop work practices in line with company plans. Skills passports are a common method used by a number of industries to identify and monitor the skills of their employees. Box 2.2 provides an example from the UK Inventory (2014)¹¹, the Nuclear Skills Passport.

In the UK public sector, skills passports are also used in areas such as the NHS. The design of such passports is developed to be a portable online record of an employee's career history. It can document training, competencies, employment history and objectives for development, all of which can be independently verified. Box 2.3 outlines the skills passport for health (from the UK Inventory, 2014)

⁹ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-20072008>

¹⁰ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory-2010>

¹¹ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

BOX 2.2: NUCLEAR Skills Passport¹²

The Nuclear Skills Passport is bringing about a step change for the nuclear sector by introducing an effective vehicle for the introduction of industry agreed and cross site recognition of internal and external skills development training. Historically all nuclear sites have trained employees and contractors to their own high standards, but when transferring staff to different facilities, the training that they have already completed has not been recognised, leading to additional training being carried out. Nuclear employers have worked with the Sector Skills Council and the National Skills Academy for Nuclear to agree training standards which will be recognised across different sites. This is known as the Nuclear Industry Training Framework, and forms an important part of the Nuclear Skills Passport.

The Nuclear Skills Passport is different to other industry Passport schemes, as it has been designed by Nuclear employers, specifically for the requirements of the nuclear sector. Piloted originally in 2010 the Nuclear Skills Passport has been rolled out across the sector since 2011 - with strong industry support.

The Nuclear Skills Passport is a system which offers all nuclear organisations instant secure web access to information on the nuclear skills base, offering a detailed overview of the training completed by their workforce as well as contracting organisations. For contractors, the Nuclear Skills Passport provides a simple, highly secure method of aiding in the demonstration of Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) – an industry benchmark for employees. This enables organisations to effectively assess and plan their training, skills and people requirements. The Skills Passport Concept comprises five key elements:

1. A web based accessible learner database that provides a registry of training records for individual passport holders and the facility to generate a skills passport card. Roles, qualifications and Industry Training Standards are held on the Nuclear Industry Training Framework (NITF). The Nuclear Industry Training Framework has been developed by the Sector Skills Council and endorsed by employers through the Skills Passport User Group and the Nuclear Employers Steering Group.
2. Dataset repository for Job Contexts. Job Contexts are agreed common job roles across industry with which associated competencies are aligned.
3. Benchmarking tool that supports and enables up-skilling and workforce mobility across the sector – enables existing employee's skills to be recognised and mapped against defined standard industry Job Context roles, highlighting gaps in skills and/or training.
4. Training signposting tool which supports up-skilling by signposting learners to Skills Academy Quality Assured training provision (courses/programmes/qualifications) to meet any identified Skills Gaps. Offers a simple modular approach to closing skills gaps through continuous learning and development with accreditation against national industry standards.
5. A reporting suite that generates statistics at industry, regional and corporate levels.

Summative assessment is required for the accreditation of informal and non-formal learning and needs to take into account the national standards defined by the qualification framework. Whilst some of the methods used in formative assessment may still applied, the verification of evidence in relation to the national standards required takes on increased

¹² <http://www.ns4p.co.uk/>

importance in summative assessment. Whilst this is not as common in the third sector, examples from how this is used in the private and public sectors contain transferable practices that could be applied to sport coaching.

BOX 2.3: Skills Passport for Health

The Skills Passport for Health covers the NHS and independent sector, permanent, contract temporary and volunteer workers, clinical and non-clinical staff across all four UK countries. For the individual, the Skills Passport for Health is intended to: provide a single verified and portable career record from education to retirement, giving mobility and flexibility across the sector and beyond; speed up career progression; provide easily identification of training needs; offer a personal development planner to define and track objectives; allow easy demonstration of suitability for new role(s) or revalidation for professional registrations. For employers, the Skills Passport for Health is intended to: provide visibility of the skills and abilities of the entire workforce; reduce duplication of training and enable employers to target training more effectively and efficiently. Employer investment in more relevant training is expected to bring productivity and efficiency savings and a better skilled workforce.

After significant employer consultation, interim modules of the Passport are in use in two regions. The full Passport is being developed and will be rolled out on a region by region basis starting in 2013. Ultimately a three year licensing model is to be agreed with a significant number of employers to ensure Passport usage will endure and spread.

In the public sector, Higher Education (HE) is documented as not only an area in which there has been a long tradition of RPL but, despite not being subject to specific legislation, also an area that has seen significant growth. A significant driver in this growth is the development of the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) quality code¹³, in which recognition of prior learning of any form is given increased emphasis. Despite this policy development, the responsibility for implementing validation and accreditation systems remains devolved to each institution, thus practice varies. Box 2.4 provides details of some of the processes involved in an RPL system in a Scottish University taken from the UK (Scotland) inventory (2014)¹⁴

The private sector also contains relevant examples of the accreditation of informal and non-formal learning. A National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) report¹⁵ published in (2013) suggested that in some sectors the use of RPL is usefully aligned with the assessment and training procedures used, and is well supported by employers. In a report compiled to detail the use of RPL in different sectors in the UK¹⁶, a number of case study examples from a range of organisations are provided. These include the use of tests and interviews to confirm the skills held by the individual, observing tasks, professional discussion and mapping experiential knowledge and skills to specific learning outcomes. One example highlighted by the UK Inventory (2014) identifies how the Institute of

¹³ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b>

¹⁴ https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/87080_UK_SC.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.niace.org.uk/current-work/using-the-recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl-within-the-qualifications-and-credit-framework>

¹⁶ <http://feedback.ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/accreditation/european/Recognition%20of%20Prior%20Learning%20Report.pdf>

Conservation (ICON) accredits professional competence based on an applicant's previously gained skills (Box 2.5).

BOX 2.4: Making Experience Count (University of the West of Scotland)

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) follows a centralised approach to the application of RPL- the university's Lifelong Learning Academy is the focus for advice and guidance to students and staff on RPL. The Academy offers a module (credit rated 10 points at SCQF level 7) called 'Making Experience Count', which provides information, advice and guidance to students wishing to make a RPL claim. The module helps students to make connections between learning they have already acquired through both formal and non-formal situations and the contribution this may make to future learning. By developing a clearer understanding of knowledge and skills already gained participants are able to use this to influence decisions about the direction they wish to take in terms of further learning, employment or community activity. The module aims to:

1. Promote recognition of strengths and skills gained through RPL to increase self-confidence and motivation,
2. Develop personal learning outcomes linked to prior learning and the SCQF level descriptors,
3. Provide evidence of learning and skills aligned to learning outcomes with particular reference to further study or personal and professional development.

The module has been further developed to support RPL bridging mechanisms within a number of degree programmes which allow entry with advanced standing for experienced professional staff through RPL. Notable examples are towards the BSc Childhood Practice, BSc Health Studies and BSc Occupational Safety and Health. Potential applicants for RPL undertake this module to gain an understanding of the process required to submit a claim for accreditation. Through workshops students are tutored on the process and are provided with an information pack with all the required information, including guidelines to prepare them for the task of making a claim for RPL.

When undertaking a subsequent claim for RPL students are provided with an Academic Supervisor with relevant expertise. Extensive feedback is provided at each stage and on completion the student submits a portfolio of evidence for assessment. This is double marked and is subject to external examination. All successful claims for RPL are considered at subject panels and follow UWS's quality assurance framework and regulations for an award.

The Making Experience Count module is offered at a nominal fee of GBP 30 (EUR 35). At present there is no additional fee for the process of supervising and assessing RPL for credit towards an award.

In the academic year 2012-13, over 50 students successfully completed the Making Experience Count module and subsequently make a successful claim for RPL. They were able to access degree programmes with advanced standing incorporating credit gained through RPL.

BOX 2.5: The Institute of Conservation (ICON)

The Institute of Conservation (ICON) has introduced a process called the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), which allows for the recognition of

professional competence of people responsible for conserving and restoring cultural heritage artefacts. It is an interesting example of the use of validation for higher-level skills. The accreditation system is based on a set of professional standards that applicants have to meet at a high level against criteria relating to knowledge, standard of work, autonomy, coping with complexity and perception of context. Potential applicants are encouraged to work with a mentor, who will generally provide support is typically by e-mail and/or telephone. The assessment process is made up of two stages. First, the applicant is required to submit an application form with information about examples of their work to the Accreditation Committee. If this first stage is successful, the applicant is then required to undergo an assessment by two assessors (one from the applicant's discipline and one from another area). The assessment takes the form of "a dialogue" and "a peer review process" rather than a test or interview. It takes place over a full working day, during which the applicant is encouraged to talk about each of their projects. The assessors relate the evidence to the standards and then make a recommendation to the Committee. More than 40 practitioners receive accreditation each year through the PACR process.

2.5 Informal and non-formal learning in coach education

Initial consultation with sport NGBs via telephone interview showed that whilst some informal and non-formal learning was taking place, systems to recognise and ultimately accredit these would, in many instances, require further development. Although practice is varied, and in some cases limited, NGBs utilise informal and non-formal learning in both a retrospective and prospective way. Retrospectively this includes recognising non-formal learning that has been certificated in some way and, to a lesser extent, informal or non-formal learning that has not been certificated. This can be used as a mechanism to gain access to a qualification as well as seeking accreditation via a specific qualification. Prospectively, many NGBs suggested that coaches taking higher level qualifications were encouraged to plan how informal and non-formal learning opportunities might feature in their future learning development. This is illustrated in figure 2.1:

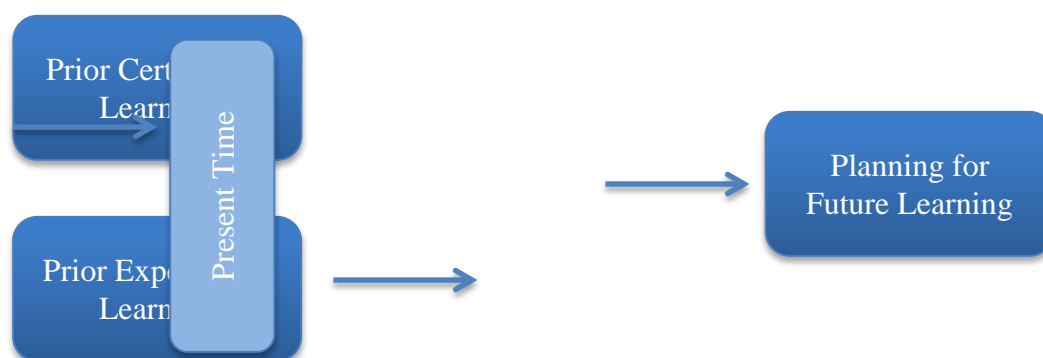


FIGURE 2.1: Prior and Future Learning

Figure 2.1 shows three areas of learning that may be accredited by sport NGBs:

- **Prior Certificated Learning:** Typically NGBs sought to accredit prior learning that was certificated. Although much of this includes examples of formal learning, such as a

teaching degree, or another coaching qualification, some non-formal learning was also described. One example includes the requirement to have certified attendance at pre-requisite workshops, such as those that cover safeguarding activities. Several NGBs noted that under their licensing schemes, certified attendance at specific CPD events could count towards licensing points.

- **Prior Experiential Learning:** Although some NGBs were able to provide some examples of recognising informal and non-formal learning that was uncertificated, this was limited, and many NGBs expressed uncertainty about how to go about this. Where this did take place, it was still a requirement to complete formal assessments for a qualification, and NGBs felt it was necessary that practical coaching skills should form part of an assessment of prior learning. Existing high level athletes were common beneficiaries of structures to recognise prior experiential learning in that they could be offered bespoke courses that did not include the technical elements that they were recognised as already having knowledge of.
- **Planning for future learning:** It was recognised by NGBs that informal and non-formal learning can play an important role in coach education and, as such, particularly at higher level qualifications coaches are often encouraged to plan how they might incorporate this into their development. A typical component of these higher level qualifications is mentoring, which might be considered as non-formal learning. Coaches at this level are more likely to be encouraged to consider how their observations and discussions with other coaches might inform their practice.

2.6. Summary: Scope for informal and non-formal learning

There is increasing interest in the development of systems that can recognise, validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning, both from a domestic and international perspective. A variety of sectors provide examples of where such systems are in development and being applied. In sport coaching specifically, a review of the academic literature demonstrates a growing interest in the role of informal and non-formal learning in coach education, but little headway has been made in discussing the processes by which this might be achieved and providing evidence of its effects on coaching practice. Practically, NGBs suggested they understood the importance of being able to recognise the range of learning a candidate might use in developing their coaching and, more specifically, undertaking coaching qualifications. Although many admitted their practices could be enhanced, they expressed an interest in developing a greater understanding of how to implement processes that are effective. Reports from NGBs suggest that although there is scope to improve processes, prior informal and non-formal learning is being recognised, and in some cases accredited, and consideration as to how this might be used for future learning is taking place.

3. SYSTEMS FOR VALIDATING AND ACCREDITING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

HEADLINES

- **Four key systems can be identified as central to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning: information and guidance; support systems; assessment systems; and quality assurance.**
 - **The four systems should be underpinned by quality indicators identified in European guidelines: reliability and validity; safety, security and confidentiality; standards/referential; visibility/transparency; fitness for purpose; and cost efficiency.**
 - **Examples of good practice from other sectors are available and can be applied in the sport coaching environment.**
-

The purpose of this section is to outline key systems that could be used in validating and accrediting informal and non-formal learning. A number of examples of the features of each of these systems, drawn from a range of sectors including sport, are presented.

As identified in section 2.4, the higher education (HE) sector both has a long tradition of systems to validate informal and non-formal learning, and has made significant advances in the development of good practice. As such, HE provides useful and often transferable guidance that could be employed in the coaching context.

Discussions with sport NGBs indicated a number of disparate practices in coaching that would benefit from being developed and more streamlined. With this in mind, four key systems to be considered in effective delivery, and designed to recognise prior informal learning, have been drawn from a report that offers guidance to streamline RPL in higher education¹⁷: These are:

- Information and guidance.
- Support systems.
- Assessment systems.
- Quality assurance.

Drawing upon practice across HE¹⁸ and other sectors, this section identifies specific practice principles under each of these four 4 key systems, and these are illustrated in figure 3.1, These systems are underpinned by the quality indicators for validation practices identified in the European Guidelines (2009). Although the four systems were set out in the HE report specifically with reference to the accreditation of prior learning, having such systems in place allows all types of learning to be recognised throughout the learning journey.

¹⁷ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/streamlining-rpl-guidelines.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/streamlining-rpl-processes-facilitating-the-award-of-credit-for-prior-informal-learning.pdf?sfvrsn=10>

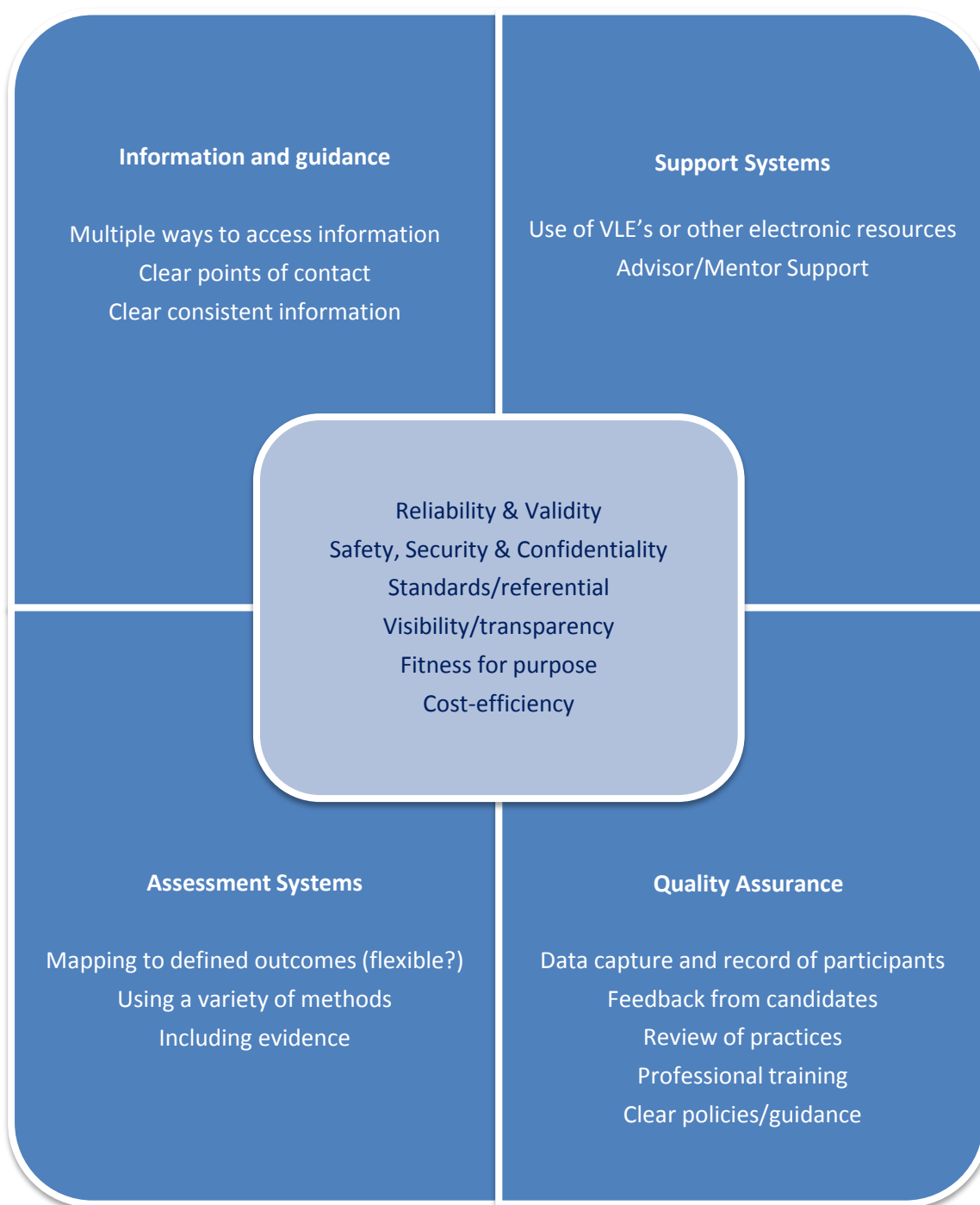


FIGURE 3.1: Four key systems and related good practice principles recognising informal and non-formal learning ¹⁹.

¹⁹ adapted from: Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning Glasgow Caledonian University September 2011
Streamlining RPL Processes: facilitating the award of credit for prior informal learning
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/streamlining-rpl-guidelines.pdf>

3.1 Information and Guidance

Policy and guidance developed should make explicit the range and scope of courses and qualifications to which it applies, make clear the responsibilities of all those involved in the process, outline the key phases and elements of support and assessment, and outline

the quality assurance systems. Examples of good practice in relation to policy and guidance can be found at Heriot Watt University²⁰ and University of Dundee²¹. Key to a successful accreditation process is that the process should be transparent and accessible. To this end, contact points should be clearly identifiable, and information and guidance needs to be available to candidates in different modes. Examples of such practice include web based and

Athabasca University provide an example of a [website](#) approach that contains relevant information for potential candidates including a video about the process (PLAR in the USA and Canada). This website also offers an example of feedback comments given by an assessor.

In Sport, the Institute of Swimming (IoS) have a [webpage](#) dedicated to providing information about RPL. The downloadable documents contain links to answer questions that candidates might have as well as outlining the complete process. This page also hosts a 'diagnostic tool' that will indicate to the candidate if they are suitable for a RPL process.

electronic examples, holding specific information sessions such as seminars and workshops, including information in handbooks or other papers such as flyers or other marketing materials, and including details in initial application forms.

3.2 Support Processes

Many HE institutions have begun to make use of e-portfolios and other e-learning tools in order to streamline their RPL systems and to maximise efficiency, and the use of technology as a

The University of Hertfordshire operates a 10 credit module called 'learning through experience', which has been adapted by different schools within the University. The module encourages learners to identify the learning they may have completed through informal and non-formal means and assists them in being able to map them to outcomes on the programme of study which they are seeking to undertake. Learners prepare and present a portfolio when can be used for APEL in their course.

vehicle to engage with candidates is a useful avenue to explore. The use of technology in this way may be useful in encouraging the learner to keep developing and documenting their learning, supporting both formative and summative uses of their informal and non-

In sport a good practice example of providing candidates with case studies and exemplars is provided by Canoe England who, via their [website](#), provide candidates with examples of both successful and non-successful applications. British Triathlon and British Cycling also make use of their virtual learning environments to engage in two way communication with candidates.

formal learning. It is advised, however, that technology, where used, should supplement not entirely replace human interaction. A guide or

²⁰ <http://www1.hw.ac.uk/registry/resources/aplguidancenotes.pdf>

²¹ http://www.dundee.ac.uk/media/dundeewebsite/qef/documents/rpl/RPL_policy_and_guidelines-Dec_2014.pdf

mentor through the process has been identified as an important part of the process and can assist the candidate in identifying and collating their learning into the format in which it needs to be submitted. The use of case studies and exemplars from other candidates who have already been through the process can also be useful.

3.3 Assessment Systems and Processes

Research with HE has demonstrated that institutions use a wide variety of ways to gather evidence of informal and non-formal learning. Whilst the most common of these is a portfolio, other methods include: reflective accounts; structured interviews; oral accounts; employer references and exams or tests. One barrier identified is the ability to map informal or non-formal learning to learning outcomes traditionally associated with formal learning. Learning outcomes that are not flexible enough to allow such mapping may prove to be a significant barrier to using these types of learning for accreditation. In such cases, mapping against

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) along with the relevant Scottish qualification bodies produced a [RPL profiling tool](#) with specific relevance to units related to health and social care. The profiling tool provides templates along with completed examples of how learners can recognise informal learning and skills they have accrued from life experiences that relate to the competencies required by the units in question.

In sport, Sports Coach UK provide example templates that a learner can use to map their experiences to particular learning outcomes. It also provides a list of level descriptors as mentioned above and feedback templates whereby assessors can detail additional evidence or experience that is warranted.

level descriptors or whole programme descriptors may be necessary.

Templates or exemplars for candidates may play an important role in making assessment efficient and provide the learner with some necessary guidance for recognising their learning. However, even with such guidance it is suggested that

further guidance or mentoring is provided to enable candidates to translate their learning into the formal context and understand the language being used to do so.

3.4 Quality Assurance

Typically, quality assurance mechanisms that are used for assessing accreditation through formal learning are suitable for those gaining accreditation through informal or non-formal learning. As with most quality assurance mechanisms, a regular review of processes is necessary. There is a need to enhance data gathering and monitoring in relation to candidates who seek and gain accreditation using informal or non-formal learning in order to establish its success. The use of virtual learning environments and e-portfolios

Professional development modules have been developed for practitioners across the UK working at any level in the education and training sector (i.e. general, vocational, higher education and adult education). Units include: Theory of recognising prior learning methodology; Formative Methods of recognising prior learning' and 'Summative Methods of Recognising Prior Learning'. Whilst these are not mandatory, it is hoped they will provide some consistency in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

Athabasca University have section on their centre for learning accreditation website that highlights their evaluation methods. Candidates are asked to evaluate the system via a weblink and the exit survey provided enables the university to collate data about the learners using the process.

might prove useful in this regard. The professional development of staff that will be engaged with accrediting informal and non-formal learning is also key to streamlining an effective process. Training opportunities for staff might include engagement with virtual communities of practice or other inter-institutional peer support networks.

3.5 Underpinning quality indicators

As part of the European guidelines produced in 2009, an evaluation checklist is provided that enables those developing validation systems to evaluate their practices. The four key systems identified above should seek to adhere to these quality indicators.

Table 3.1: Underpinning quality indicators for validation practices

| | |
|---|--|
| Reliability | The validation process must lead to trusted results. If the settings for learning and validation vary greatly, then the process of validation must allow for these differences; should the process be repeated, then the outcomes must be the same. |
| Validity | The evidence documented for an individual must be directly related to the standards being used for validation. The evidence must not be allowed to shift the understanding of the standards. |
| Safety, security & confidentiality | Initial and continuing engagement with the validation process from identification through to certification must not be compromised by a lack of trust and consequential deterioration in motivation to proceed. |
| Standards/referential | These are the basis for measuring learning outcomes; they must exist in a clear and unambiguous form that has the confidence of the key stakeholders. The standards are also an 'organiser' for the documentation phase. Without standards the validation process cannot pass the identification of learning stage. |
| Sustainability | Validation processes can be resource intensive, especially for individuals who present themselves for validation. Trust in validation also depends on the time the process has been operating and the way it is known and understood in communities. Thus sustainability is a consideration. |
| Visibility/Transparency | The way the assessment and validation process operates must generate trust for the judgements to have meaning. Transparency and visibility of the validation is one of the fundamental features supporting trust. The transparency of using established standards is particularly important. |
| Fitness for purpose | There are many methods for judging the level and sufficiency of evidence of learning. Not only should the chosen material be suited to the form of learning but methods in combination should create sensitive and trustworthy toolbox of methods assessing learning. |
| Cost-efficiency | It is generally the case that validation processes for non-formal and informal learning do not have the benefit of large scale application (large cohorts of learning being assessed in similar ways). Therefore economies of scale are limited and costs need to be measured in relation to expected returns to the stakeholders concerned. |

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF SYSTEMS TO VALIDATE AND ACCREDIT INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACHING

HEADLINES

- **Consultation with NGBs suggest that the four key systems to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning – information and guidance, support systems, assessment systems and quality assurance – can be adapted and adopted for use in a process to accredit informal and non-formal learning in sport coach education.**
 - **Key concerns and challenges include: ensuring systems are not too onerous for the learner; effecting a culture change to consider sport coach education to be a learning journey rather than a qualification collection exercise; the delivery of effective and efficient systems within a cost-effective funding model.**
 - **Key enablers to implementing systems within sport coaching include: helping learners to understand if they are an appropriate candidate for qualification by informal or non-formal learning; the development of an effective mentor workforce; providing assessment opportunities relevant to both the learner and the coaching environment; ensuring assessors have the skillset to assess evidence of informal and non-formal learning.**
-

Current provision for recognising candidates' informal and non-formal learning varies across sport NGBs as noted previously. Many NGBs have little in the way of a formal RPL process, and for those that do, the recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning is seen to be challenging. In addition, examples of planning for the accreditation of future informal and non-formal learning were all ad hoc.

Although coach education is a dynamic, fluid and constantly evolving practice, there is a need for stability in the underpinning principles through which learning is accredited. Consequently, proposals to provide for wider use and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning draw on the same underlying principles that are applied to formal learning.

However, there remain some concerns. Firstly, from the learner's perspective, systems involved in a process to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning should not be so onerous for the learner that they act as a disincentive to engage. Secondly, from the perspective of both the learner and sport NGBs, there is a need for a culture change regarding the nature of learning to inform and underpin coaching practice. In particular, qualifications should be viewed as stages in the learning journey rather than an end point in their own right. The learning journey, rather than the collection of qualifications, should drive the development of all forms of learning in coach education. Finally, from the perspective of the sport NGBs, systems comprising a process to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning need to be cost-effective. As such, consideration needs to be given to the scale, scope and cost of, for example, the mentor provision and training required to deliver systems to accredit informal and non-formal learning across all levels of coach education qualification frameworks. These and other costs, such as those for

assessors, verifiers and associated administration, are likely to require a funding model in which the validation and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning is delivered at the same, if not greater, cost to the candidate as that for qualification by traditional formal learning. There are also likely to be considerable upfront costs in establishing systems to accredit informal and non-formal learning.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the sport NGBs consulted in the second stage of this research, through workshops and in the final consultation, were able to identify a range of facilitators and issues that could be incorporated or addressed in the use of the four key systems outlined in section 3 within a process to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning in sport coaching.

Information and Guidance: NGBs suggested that any information and guidance they provide in the initial stages of any processes they currently offer to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning is often limited, largely due to their limited capability to deal with large amounts of applicants. However, NGBs agreed that for a process to work efficiently, systems to provide good quality early information and guidance must be in place. In particular, such information and guidance should help prospective learners to understand and decide if they are an appropriate candidate to utilise a process based on informal and non-formal learning. As such, systems need to be in place not only to make information and guidance widely available, but also to ensure that it is clear enough for candidates to understand the process without being overwhelmed by detail of jargon, particularly as many prospective learners will not be familiar with the requirements of validating and accrediting informal and non-formal learning.

Support Systems: The use of e-learning and e-resources was welcomed by NGBs, some of whom suggested that the technology they currently use does, or could potentially, enhance practices in recognising informal and non-formal learning in both prior and future learning. NGBs saw the development of the mentor workforce as a key priority for accreditation of informal and non-formal learning to be effective. In particular, the development of mentors to engage with the learning journey with the candidate, rather than simply assist learners to achieve a qualification, was seen as important.

Assessment Systems: NGBs recognised the need to change the nature of language to move away from traditional perceptions of assessment, and to encourage more longitudinal approaches to assessment. This would help to move both NGBs and learners towards the concept of a learning journey. The range of assessment methods used also needs to be expanded, and the extent to which assessment opportunities can be provided that are both relevant to the individual and the coaching environment needs to be considered. The ability to assess in the field was also a key issue for NGBs, particularly in terms of allowing learners to show their ability to contextualise knowledge. Alternative means of assessing practice, such as video, could be offered, and while it is helpful to provide candidates with example forms of evidence, there should still be room for learners to be creative in evidencing their skills and experience. Nonetheless, assessing the quality of informal and non-formal learning, and the evidence supporting this learning, will be a considerable challenge for NGBs.

Quality Assurance: In the vast majority of cases the current quality assurance processes in place in sport coaching will be suitable for candidates achieving a qualification utilising informal and non-formal learning. Samples of all approaches should be included in sample verification to ensure parity across learners and learning forms. Also, the training of assessors was again noted as a priority by NGBs for informal and non-formal accreditation systems to be effective. The focus on being able to measure learning based on the assessment of evidence of informal and non-formal learning, is likely to pose challenges to assessors' existing skill sets. As such, an assessor development programme is likely to be required for systems to be successful.

Overall, consultation with NGBs suggests that the four key systems to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning can be adapted and adopted for use in a process to accredit informal and non-formal learning in sport coach education. Consequently, the diagram illustrating these four key processes and their underpinning quality indicators, originally presented as figure 3.1 in section 3, has been adapted to account for the concerns and issues highlighted by sport NGBs to illustrate how these systems might be implemented in sport coaching (figure 4.1). These systems and quality indicators underpin the *Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching*, presented in section A as the outcome of this research.



FIGURE 4.1: Systems and good practice principles to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning in sport coaching

5. QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

HEADLINES

- **The *Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching* has been developed to be flexible enough to be used across a range of contexts, including international development.**
 - **A key question for the international context is which organisation's coaching qualifications are offered, as this is likely to determine which organisation or body accredits learning and manages the process of accreditation.**
 - **Other key questions include: where will the stages of the process be delivered?; what evidence will be available for assessment?; who will provide and train the workforce of mentors and assessors?; how will quality assurance take place, and who will be responsible for it?**
-

One of the key priorities for this research was to develop a set of principles or a process that will be flexible enough to be used in an international context. In this respect, the *Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching* has been developed to be flexible and to enable use across a range of contexts, including international development. However, there are some key questions and challenges to consider in applying the model process within the context of international development, and these are briefly outlined here.

Firstly, and fundamentally, the key question will be which organisation's coaching qualifications are offered, as this is likely to determine which organisation or body accredits learning and manages the process of accreditation. Furthermore in situations where this body does not manage the delivery of the qualification, who will be responsible for delivering this? In the international context, there are likely to be three likely scenarios:

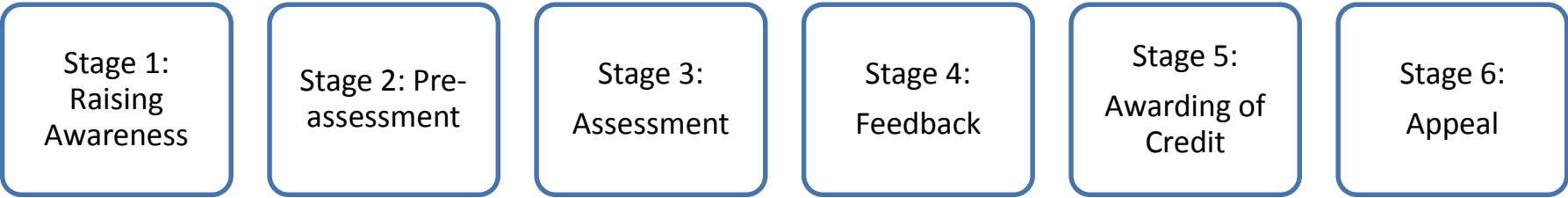
1. That a sport governing body, either sport specific or generic, in the country concerned offers the qualification, manages and delivers the process.
2. That a sport national governing body (NGB) in the UK (or other country), or international body such as the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) or UNESCO offers and manages the qualification but this is delivered by a local governing body/federation.
3. That a sport national governing body (NGB) in the UK (or other country), or international body such as the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) or UNESCO offers, manages and delivers the qualification.

Across each of these three scenarios, a range of further questions relating to delivery assessment, workforce and workforce training, and quality assurance need to be considered (this list is not exhaustive):

- *Where will the stages of the process be delivered?*
While it is highly likely that the learning period will take place in the country concerned, it is possible that the pre-assessment stage, which should be supported by advice and guidance, may take place in the country offering the qualification, or at an international coaching workshop or symposium. Other stages may also take place outside the country concerned; for example, for future informal and non-formal learning, the assessment and feedback loop may be delivered at meetings or workshops.
- *What evidence will be available for assessment?*
In countries where formal sport development structures are less developed, some forms of evidence offered as examples in figure A2 in section A may not be available. For example, certificates of attendance at training activities may not have been provided, or organisations or individuals may not be in place to provide references, performance appraisals or letters of recommendation.
- *Who will provide and train the workforce of mentors and assessors?*
This is a particularly salient question if the process is delivered in the country concerned but is not managed by a sport governing body indigenous to that country. If systems of mentorship and assessment are delivered from the UK (or other country where an accrediting body may be based), considerations arise regarding communication channels and whether there is a need for face-to-face visits or guidance. This may also be true if an international body is managing the process.
- *How will quality assurance take place, and who will be responsible for it?*
A further workforce of quality assurance professionals will be required and, regardless of who is managing the process, delivering quality assurance systems in the international development context will be challenging.

The issues arising from the above questions are not insurmountable, as the model process developed is flexible enough to provide for a range of approaches to addressing these issues. Figure 5.1 that follows details more specific considerations for each of the potential scenarios provided.

Figure 5.1:
Considerations for the
International Context



Scenario 1: Local Sport Governing Body offers the qualification and manages the process

This stage is likely to be largely localised. The local context will determine relevant opportunities. Opportunities may also exist at international events.

Where guidance to candidates is delivered locally, the workforce may require training. Accessibility for different types of support structures, e.g internet, face to face should be established.

The assessor workforce may require training to support the assessment process. Appropriate assessment mechanisms for informal and non-formal learning should be developed and used.

Mechansims to provide feedback to learners should be established. This may occur when all evidence is submitted or may form part of an ongoing process. Mechanisms for each form should be considered.

The awarding of credit for informal and non-formal learning should be conducted in the same way as formal learning.

Appeal procedures should concur with those for formal learning. These should be recorded and procedures readily available for learners.

Scenario 2: A UK NGB or international organisation (IO) offers the qualification and delegates' delivery to a local governing body

Communication between the NGB's/IO's and local governing body is required to determine the delivery strategy. The language and transport of physical material should be considered.

The local workforce may require training as to the appropriate forms of evidence and how to offer sufficient guidance to learners.

The assessor workforce may require training to support the assessment process.

The local workforce may require training in the provision of formative and summative feedback. Where delivery is localised, the responsibility and mechanisms for quality assurance should be established.

Where the awarding body is like to be remote, procedures for the awarding of credit should be established between the NGB's'/IO's and the local governing body.

Communication between NGB's'/IO's and the local governing body is required to determine the process for, and action appeals.

Scenario 3: A UK NGB or International organisation (IO) offers the qualification and this is managed and delivered by this NGB or IO

Figure 5.1 outlines the considerations for what we believe might be feasible scenarios for implementing the model process in the international development context. Given this, these scenarios make several assumptions detailed below.

Scenario 1

Where a local governing body determines it would like to deliver a process to accredit informal and non-formal learning the model process will apply (Scenario 1). This provides guidance to governing bodies about the conditions and arrangements necessary to conduct such a process within their own qualification structure. This may require support from other governing bodies that have successfully piloted or are currently delivering the process (this type of support is not explicitly accounted for in Figure 5.1).

Scenario 2

Where a local governing body has a limited qualification structure, though possess some resources to deliver the model process, it is feasible that a NGB or IO may provide the qualification on which to base this but delegate the delivery of the process to a local governing body. In this instance communication between these parties is paramount to ensure the quality assurance of the process and thus the awarding of the qualification. In this regard it may be suitable for the NGB or IO to provide adequate training to the localised workforce. It is also assumed that the NGB or IO offering the qualification already has sufficient mechanisms in place for stages 1 – 6 of the model process including the capacity and expertise to train additional workforce members where this might be necessary.

Scenario 3

Where no such local governing body exists or is not sufficiently resourced to deliver this process, it is feasible a national governing body (NGB) from another country or an international organisation (IO) may implement the process using their own existing qualifications. Where this takes place it is assumed in the graphic that the NGB or IO already has sufficient mechanisms in place to deliver stages 1 – 6 of the model process. The focus in this example is therefore on the issues of providing this in a non-local context.

APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This appendix describes the consultation phase of the research with NGBs. This included several stages. After initial email contact, a telephone interview with appropriate representatives from each participating governing body was carried out to ascertain current practice in relation to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Subsequently these representatives were invited to attend one of two workshops designed to share elements of good practice from sport and alternative sectors. These workshops were followed up by the dissemination of a working document summarizing the key themes from each workshop. This was sent to all NGBs that took part in the telephone interview and/or the workshop for comment. The NGBs that took part in each stage of the research are listed in table I.

Stage 1: Telephone Phone Interviews

After initial email contact the first stage of the consultation phase was a telephone interview to discuss each NGBs current practices in relation to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Telephone interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and included standardized questions in addition to elaborative questions where appropriate.

Stage 2: Informal and Non-formal learning workshops.

As a result of the findings of the stage 1 telephone interviews, workshops were developed to discuss good practice principles in to accredit informal and non-formal learning, with a specific emphasis on RPL (Specifically APEL). Representatives from the NGBs that took part in the stage 1 telephone interviews were invited to attend one of two workshops, which were also attended by representatives from the EIS, Sport England and UK Sport. A working document was subsequently disseminated to all those NGBs who had taken part in the telephone interview and/or workshop for their comments.

Workshop description:

Two workshops were conducted in April. For geographical convenience, one took place in London, and one took place in Manchester. Attendees to the workshop are listed in table 1. The workshop was conducted in two sections. The first of these sections contained feedback on the research so far including a review of the NGB telephone interview findings and the key findings from the documentary review. Delegates were invited to discuss both aspects of the project to date. The second section focused on consideration and guidelines and systems for accrediting informal and non-formal learning. Delegates were presented with an example RPL process published by the National Coaching Foundation (2012) and invited to discuss this, after which they were asked to comment on some good practice principles from the 4 key systems, specifically; information and guidance, support systems, assessment systems, and quality assurance.

TABLE I: NGBs taking part in each stage of the research

| Sport | Governing Body | Telephone Interview | Workshop attendance | Workshop Comments |
|--------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Badminton | Badminton England | ✓ | x | x |
| Equestrian | British Equestrian Federation | ✓ | x | x |
| Cycling | British Cycling | ✓ | ✓ | x |
| Gymnastics | British Gymnastics | ✓ | ✓ | x |
| Boccia | GB Boccia | ✓ | x | x |
| Archery | Archery GB | ✓ | x | ✓ |
| Canoeing | British Canoeing | ✓ | x | x |
| Hockey | GB Hockey | ✓ | ✓ | x |
| Sailing | RYA | ✓ | ✓ | x |
| Shooting | British Shooting | ✓ | x | x |
| Swimming | Scottish Swimming | ✓ | x | x |
| Triathlon | British Triathlon | ✓ | ✓ | x |
| Football | FA | ✓ | ✓ | x |
| Rugby | RFU | ✓ | x | x |
| Table Tennis | Table Tennis England | ✓ | x | ✓ |
| Golf | PGA | x | ✓ | ✓ |
| Rowing | GB Rowing | ✓ | ✓ | x |

Recognising informal and non-formal learning: Good practice guidelines for coach education

A working document

Workshop Context:

After initial telephone conversations with NGB representatives concerning the ways in which they recognise informal and non-formal learning, it was identified that a workshop opportunity to discuss principles of good practice would provide a useful mechanism for discussion about the processes involved in recognising different forms of learning. As a result two workshops were hosted, consisting of delegates representing coach education within their respective NGB's and representatives from the EIS, UK Sport and Sport England.

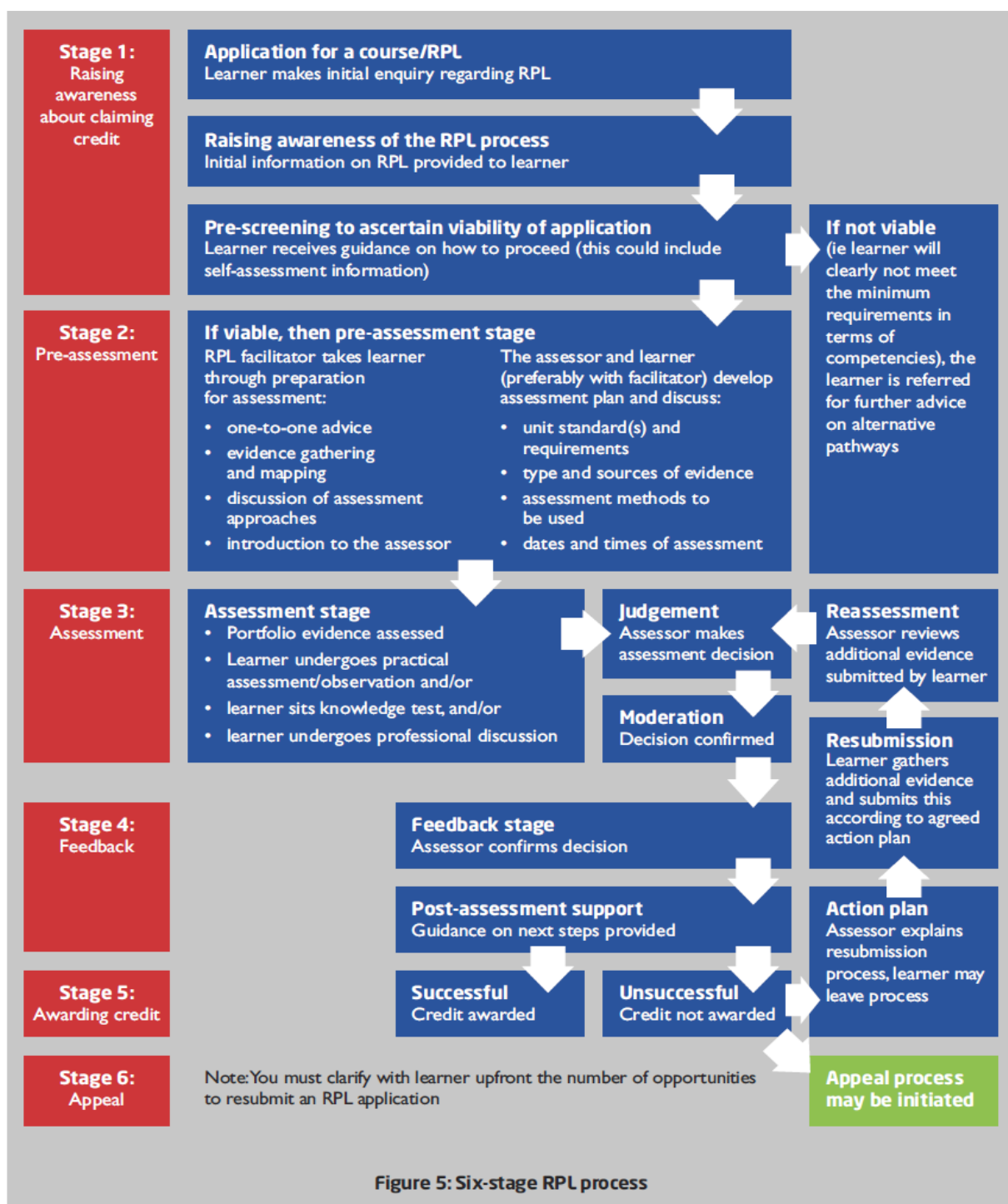
During the course of the workshops a model published by the National Coaching Foundation (2012) was presented to delegates and discussed. This was followed by the discussion of emerging principles of good practice from other sectors, related to key process features namely; information and guidance, support processes, assessment processes and systems, and quality assurance.

These discussions acknowledged a dynamic and often changing picture of the nature of coaching and coach education more broadly. This included the opportunities that may be available to utilise informal and non-formal learning to a greater degree in existing coaching qualifications/frameworks and the ways in which this might be achieved. Whilst acknowledging this objective, this document focuses on the themes of discussion particularly pertinent to how we might recognise informal and non-formal learning that a candidate already has. This recognition may form part of an RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) or more specifically APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) procedure.

Presented in this document is the RPL process published by the National Coaching Foundation (2012), a set of good practice guidelines emergent from the workshop discussions and finally some facilitating and constraining features of the process identified through the workshops. In some cases the material presented is similar to both workshops and in some cases is unique to either workshop.

You are invited to comment on the material provided in this working document.

Recommended RPL Process (Sports s UK/UKCC)²²



²² <http://www.sportscoachuk.org/resource/recognition-prior-learning-developing-process-and-procedures>

APEL: Good Practice Guidelines

Information and guidance:

Information and guidance about APEL processes provided to candidates should be accessible in multiple locations and be presented in different modes. This might include websites, other e-tools, course packages, and via interaction with NGB staff (for example by telephone or email).

Consideration should be given to the nature and detail of the information provided, so that candidates will be best positioned to understand the process.

Information and guidance at the initiation of the process needs to be sufficient so that the candidate is able to conduct a degree of self-assessment as to whether or not they are suitable for the process.

Support processes

Candidates should receive support and guidance in collecting evidence for, and preparing their APEL submission.

The use of technology (e.g. e-portfolios, virtual learning environments) to enhance support throughout the process should be considered. This should not replace human interaction with the candidate, but instead should be used to offer enhanced communication and support.

The use of case studies and exemplars of previous submissions are a useful form of guidance to the candidate as to how they should prepare their submission and what they should include.

Assessment processes and systems

Assessment should utilise methods that are both suitable to assess the nature of the learning that has taken place and the nature of the learner themselves.

Flexibility regarding the nature of evidence should be encouraged providing the learner with greater opportunity to document their learning.

Assessment needs to be contextualised to the coaching role and may require a longitudinal approach.

Quality Assurance Systems

Quality assurance processes should be aligned to those that are used to assess candidates using a formal pathway.

All practitioners involved in the APEL process (e.g. administrators, mentors, and assessors) should receive adequate training to support the development of the skill sets required to accredit informal and non-formal learning.

Quality assurance processes should ensure adequate data capture and monitoring and use this to regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of APEL processes.

Facilitating features to the implementation of an APEL process:

In order that APEL procedures can be implemented successfully, several key features were identified as key development areas. Specifically these were; the training and development of key personnel in the process; and developing the learner for an ongoing learning journey.

Training and development:

Discussion in the workshops identified that an APEL process may require several key personnel, including administrative contacts, mentors and assessors. It was highlighted that these personnel would all need education regarding the process and that specific skills for these roles may also require development. For mentors this includes an understanding of developing the coach as a whole, rather than simply mentoring for the acquisition of a qualification. For assessors, the focus of being able to measure learning based on the assessment of evidence of informal learning, it was suggested, would pose challenges to existing skill sets of these personnel in some cases. As such development of such skill sets would be required for an APEL process to be successful.

Developing the learner for the ongoing learning journey:

The workshops identified that the nature of the learner is also fundamental to processes that both recognise prior informal and non-formal learning and those processes intended to use this learning as part of ongoing coach development. Delegates suggested many candidates may not have the skill sets or approach that is best suited for the use of these types of learning, and that this requires some development on behalf of the learner for these processes to be successful. Discussions concerning changing the nature of language to move away from traditional perceptions of assessment, and encouraging more longitudinal approaches to assessment may be useful avenues in this regard.

Constraints and challenges to the implementation of an APEL process:

Workshop discussions highlighted issues that some delegates felt constrain the ability to develop and provide a process for recognising informal and non-formal learning. These challenges relate to the fluid and changing environments of NGBs more broadly and the scalability of such processes.

Fluid and Changing NGB environments

The workshops identified that coaching education is a dynamic, fluid and rapidly changing environment and that constantly changing systems and environments within NGB's poses a challenge to the development, and long term implementation of an APEL system. In addition high rates of staff turnover often results in the migration of knowledge across NGB's but constrains the ongoing development of appropriate processes.

Scalability

In discussion regarding the good practice principles challenges emerged as to the scalability of having APEL processes across all levels of coaching qualifications. In particular, the scalability of providing key personnel such as mentors and assessors that require more comprehensive roles at early qualifications stages with larger number of candidates. Discussion also reflected on some value at attendance at courses, suggesting that peer learning and engagement in group activities can represent quality learning experiences across all levels of qualifications.

APPENDIX III: SPORT COACH EDUCATION LITERATURE REVIEW – IN DETAIL

Phase 1: Sport Coaching Research Review

Academic interest in coach learning has stimulated an increasing volume of research literature in recent decades. In an attempt to summarise some of this this research a review of literature was published by Sports s UK in 2010. The review described research literature from 1993 – 2008 and identified several key features of the research evidence to date:

- *There is a relative absence of research empirically informed literature into coach learning.*
- *There is an absence of literature concerning the use, implementation, and impact upon practice, of different approaches to learning.*
- *The research evidence to date gives little detail as to the preferences and needs of different coaching groups.*
- *Research has tended to focus on expert or elite coaches and thus more research using coaches at different developmental points is needed.*

The Sports Coach UK review also summarised key findings relating to aspects of formal, informal and non-formal learning as summarised below;

Formal learning: Little evidence is cited as being available to evaluate the impact of formal learning on practice and knowledge development, though research examining’s experience of formal learning has been critical. Some criticisms highlighted include the basic nature of understanding provided, the gap between theoretical and applied knowledge, the overload of lots of information in a short period of time and that coaches later in their careers come to question some of the material taught. Formal learning has also been criticized for not taking into account the theoretical aspects of learning theories in the delivery of its education. Responses to such criticisms have encouraged the use of approaches such as mentoring and reflection, but there is no evidence as to the effectiveness of these approaches in coach learning.

Non-formal learning: Although the literature has not always been clear in how they separate these from formal learning opportunities, it is clear coaches engage with non-formal learning activities. A small amount of research exploring interventions designed to modify coaching behaviours was included to demonstrate the role of non-formal learning, though it is acknowledged the research designs could be further enhanced for greater understanding of the efficacy of such interventions. The research into non-formal learning in other domains has not yet been implemented within coach learning, however the report notes several challenges to this including the design of CPD that is cognisant of the complexity of learning, to relate the professional learning and professional practice as a single activity and to find better ways of understanding and evaluating CPD and learning to influence how it is structured to meet different needs.

Informal learning: Informal learning is highlighted as the dominant mode of learning in coaches largely due to the limitations of formal provision, lack of overarching structure and issues around volunteerism. The report suggests reflection is consistently identified as a way to learn from experience, but there is little evidence to link this to coach effectiveness. In addition, mentoring is cited as being widely advocated but again, little evidence exists to allow a robust evaluation of its impact on coach learning. Lastly communities of practice are highlighted by the report to have some utility in coach education, but research indicates mixed success largely influenced by the need to engage a facilitator.

Update to Literature review (2009 – 2014)

To extend knowledge of the current research literature available in the sport context a search of academic literature published between 2009 and 2014 was conducted using SportDiscus. In order to focus on informal and non-formal coach learning specifically the following key terms were used; ‘Coach AND Informal’; ‘Coach AND Non Formal’; ‘Coach AND Accreditation’; ‘Coach AND Validation’ and were limited to peer reviewed articles in English, producing 130 returns. After removing duplicates (39), abstracts were reviewed to identify those articles relevant to the topic, leaving 62 papers. It should be highlighted that over half of these papers are listed as commentaries to original articles. For example, included in the review is the 2011 issue of Annual Review of Golf Coaching entitled; ‘Accrediting Masters PGA Coaches’²³ which contains 33 additional commentaries and 6 commentaries were associated with Mallet, Trudel, Lyle and Rynne (2009); ‘Formal versus Informal Coach Education’²⁴. These commentaries have been included in the review as they contribute useful knowledge to the area.

Consistent with previous reports, papers in the review that focused on the acquisition of coaching knowledge reflected that coaches developed their coaching skills by utilizing formal informal and non-formal learning experiences. This was true for the development of particular knowledge, for example positive youth development²⁵, and in different coaching groups for example high school coaches²⁶ and elite rugby strength and conditioning coaches²⁷. Additional research examining coaches’ preferences also emerged, supporting previous studies that coaches value experiential sources of learning, though highlighting that level of academic experience may influence this, with those holding greater academic qualifications demonstrating a preference for informal and non-formal learning

²³ Jenkins, S. (2012). Annual Review of Golf Coaching 2012. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*.

²⁴ Mallet, C.J. Trudel, P., Lyle, J., & Rynne, S.B. (2009) Formal vs informal coach education. *International journal of sport science & coaching*, 4, (3), 325 – 334.

²⁵ Camiré, M., Trudel, P., & Forneris, T. (2012). Examining how model youth sport coaches learn to facilitate positive youth development. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, (November), 1–17.

²⁶ Wilson, L. M., Bloom, G. a., & Harvey, W. J. (2010). Sources of knowledge acquisition: perspectives of the high school teacher/coach. *Physical Education & Sport Pedagogy*, 15(4), 383–399.

²⁷ Hanratty, M. & O’Connor, D. (2012) Understanding expert knowledge: A case study of knowledge acquisition in elite rugby league strength and conditioning coaches. *International journal of coaching science* (6)1, 45-63

experiences.²⁸ Importantly the role of coaching development officers were also evaluated in a study that demonstrated they are an important source for identifying informal and non-formal learning opportunities for coaches and in some instances delivered these themselves.²⁹

Concerning the accreditation of PGA masters coaches, a great deal of discussion is devoted to assessment mechanisms that could be employed. These include portfolio's, teaching master classes, Q & A, oral presentations, field based learning modules, documenting expert meetings. Some other key issues in this discussion concern the role of the master coach and whether or not assessment should be limited to coaching expertise as demonstrated through coaching players, and whether or not it would be appropriate to assess a coach on their willingness, or their ability to share this knowledge with other coaches. In discussion pertaining to the skills and knowledge expected of the coach, it is recognized that the 'artistry' and not just the science of coaching, should be recognized and the difficulties associated with recognising both tacit and explicit knowledge.

Continuing with the theme of assessment, Hay et al³⁰ highlight the importance of providing efficacious assessment methods in coach education that embrace both assessment for learning in addition to assessment of competence. They suggest for assessment to be efficacious, it should encourage self-assessment and facilitate engagement with expert feedback. To be valid it should be relevant to, and representative of, the level accreditation and should be accessible to candidates from different demographic and geographical backgrounds. They cite web based video technology as a useful area through which this type of assessment might be generated, though this is subject to some criticism of feasibility amongst different coaching groups, particularly volunteers.

Several papers focused on professionalization of coaching and the associated political issues, from both an individual and organizational perspective. Specifically this included the recognition of changing language systems in the development of coaching frameworks, reflecting on shifts from 'coach education' to 'coach learning' and 'accreditation and certification' to 'ongoing professional development'. On an individual level, concern was also expressed about the tension between growing professionalization of coaching and the strong culture of volunteerism in many sports and the impact of this on existing coach practitioners. Again on an individual level, the degree of social capital afforded to former athletes was discussed in relation to coaches following a more traditional coaching pathway and how gender might act as a barrier to using some sports as a means of developing coaching knowledge.

²⁸ Mesquita, I., Isidro, S., & Rosado, A. (2010). Portuguese coaches' perceptions of and preferences for knowledge sources related to their professional background. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 9(3), 480–489.

²⁹ North, J. (2012). Using "Coach Developers" to Facilitate Coach Learning and Development: Qualitative Evidence from the UK. *International Journal of Sport Science and Coaching*, 5(2), 239–257. doi:10.1260/1747-9541.5.2.239

³⁰ Hay, P., Dickens, S., Crudgington, B., & Engstrom, C. (2012). Exploring the Potential of Assessment Efficacy in Sports Coaching. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 7(2), 223–226. doi:10.1260/1747-9541.7.2.223

Of particular note to the report was a paper and associated commentaries reflecting on a workshop entitled 'Formal Vs Informal Coach Education' held during the International Council of Coach Education Master Class in Beijing (2007). The key issues from this paper and commentaries were:

- *There is a need to clarify the terminology being used amongst all stakeholders. This not only includes the understanding of formal versus informal versus non-formal, but also the differences between 'learning', 'education' and 'development' which are often used interchangeably.*
- *There is recognition that effective coach education might embrace formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities. The combination of technical and craft knowledge required by coaches may lend itself to different forms of learning, but we lack empirical evidence for this.*
- *In order to achieve the most from informal and non-formal learning opportunities, we may have to develop learner's abilities to utilise all forms of learning.*
- *The accreditation of informal and non-formal learning is a significant challenge in that these learning opportunities are 'widely variable in quality and not readily amenable to accreditation'.*
- *The specific nature of the sector poses particular challenges to the recognition of informal or non-formal learning. The nature of coaching required by different sports and levels of coaching as some examples. The competitive nature of the sector makes the sharing of information problematic and intervention strategies need to work with and not against this. In addition the strong volunteer element to the sector makes processes requiring significant investment of behalf of the learner more challenging.*

Although there has been increasing areas of academic interest in coach learning, since 2010 there has been minimal advance of empirical evidence concerning the efficacy of different learning approaches for knowledge and understanding or indeed the impact of these learning approaches on coach effectiveness. There is also a paucity of research examining the implementation of validation and accreditation procedures for recognising different types of learning.

In summary, the key findings from the updated review are:

- *Consistent with previous reports³¹ many of the studies demonstrate that coaching knowledge is derived from a balance of formal, non-formal and informal learning.*
- *Again consistent with previous reports, the literature highlights that coaches suggest that they recognise and ascribe value to informal and non-formal learning opportunities, particularly episodic learning experiences and experiential learning.*

³¹ <http://www.sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/Coach---Learning---and---Dev---Review.pdf>

- *Different learning methods might be suitable for different career stages. For example one study demonstrated that more informal learning was used when already in a coaching role.*
- *Of the small amount of studies that address assessment, a number of feasible assessment methods are suggested such as video evidence of coaching practice, leading group seminars and video conferencing. However, it is highlighted that for assessment to be effective, the efficacy of assessment methods should be further explored.*
- *Previous athletic experiences appear to form a major part of what is recognised as prior non-formal or informal learning. It is suggested this can generate important social capital for ex -athletes looking for coaching work/development.*
- *Consistent with the report highlighted above, there is an increase in empirical studies using coaches as participants; however there is a limited representation of quantitative or experimental designs.*
- *The outcomes of non-formal and informal coach education have received little attention, with the exception of one systematic review³² examining the impact of non-formal coach education on interpersonal relationships with athletes. However this review reveals a paucity of research literature in this regard.*

³² <http://researchdirect.uws.edu.au/islandora/object/uws%3A15362>