



Coach Education Review

A Research Report to British Orienteering

Submitted by:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In reviewing British Orienteering's strategic plan to 2025, the mission for the organisation is to "to lead, govern, promote and develop orienteering in the UK", through three strategic programmes focusing on: (1) increasing participation, (2) competitive orienteering; and (3) podium success. To achieve the strategic outcomes within the first (increasing participation) and last (podium success) of these strategic programmes, a key component is to develop and support the club 'volunteer'/coaching infrastructure to help retain participants, while recognising the need for a clear development pathway for both participation and high-performance coaches. Therefore, British Orienteering are keen to conduct a review into their current coach education pathway to help understand coaches' and coaches' developers' perspectives, with the intention of enhancing future provision towards 2025 and beyond. Consequently, to support British Orienteering's strategic plan to 2025 and their identified strategic programmes, the aim of this research was to critically analyse British Orienteering's coach education provision, while offering recommendations for future practice.

Data were collected via an online qualitative survey, which was open for 11 weeks between March 10th, 2023, and May 26th, 2023, and was completed by 34 UK-based orienteering coaches. The survey explored coaches' experiences of attending and engaging with British Orienteering's current coach education pathway, in addition to their suggested changes and improvements to any future provision. In addition to the survey, three focus groups were conducted in April 2023 involving eight coaches who participated in the survey, with the aim of expanding upon their survey responses in further depth and detail, while discussing proposed changes. Moreover, one focus group was conducted in May 2023 with three coach developers to understand their thoughts and experiences of both designing and delivering coach education programmes for British Orienteering. To supplement the empirical data collected, analysis of five British Orienteering coach education documents was conducted, to understand the development of policy and curriculum.

Both the survey and focus group data were analysed via thematic analysis and resulted in the creation of five themes which capture coaches' perspectives towards British Orienteering's current coach education pathway and provision: (1) Accessibility of coach education; (2) Promotion, dissemination, and awareness of coach education; (3) Participant interaction and practical delivery; (4) Assessment procedures and the role of coach developers;

and (5) Content and structure of current provision. Furthermore, in building upon the suggestions, preferences, and thoughts of both coaches and coach developers, three primary recommendations are made for British Orienteering to enhance and develop future coach education: (1) (Re)introducing Level 1 and 3 coach education provision; (2) Avoid fast tracking in coach education; and (3) Coaching membership and ongoing coach development.

The findings of this research provide British Orienteering with a comprehensive understanding of coaches' experiences of, and perceptions towards, the current coach education pathway and learning opportunities the organisation offers. In critically analysing these perspectives, recommendations to improve future provision are outlined, which are grounded in the suggestions and ideas of orienteering coaches and coach developers. While acknowledging the logistical constraints associated with designing and delivering additional coach education provision for coaches, it is believed these recommendations offer feasible solutions which can be modified further to help contribute towards the 2025 Strategic Plan and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Howard Blackman at British Orienteering for his support, engagement, and enthusiasm towards this project. Howard has a clear passion for coaching and coach development, and I have thoroughly enjoyed our conversations and discussions throughout the project's duration. I hope we can continue our working relationship moving forwards.

I would also like to thank all the participants who gave up their time to share their perspectives on British Orienteering's coach education provision. While coach education can sometimes be seen as an 'easy target' to direct criticism towards, you have all offered insightful comments on the current pathway, while offering innovative and practical suggestions for how future provision can be improved. I have done my best to represent your voices and opinions.

INTRODUCTION

Research context:

While historically popular across Scandinavia and other European countries (Bergström et al., 2021), within the United Kingdom (UK) orienteering's modest profile and perception of it being "a non-competitive walking and map-reading pastime" has posed challenges to reaching wider audiences and increasing participation (Newton, 2019, p, 48). Nonetheless, figures from British Orienteering's (2021) annual report have suggested that in 2021 alone just under 88,500 orienteers participated in over 1000 competitive events across the UK. Moreover, there are roughly 120 active orienteering community clubs in the UK (British Orienteering, 2023), which offer opportunities for participation regardless of age and competition level. To support both high-performance and recreational orienteers within UK community clubs, volunteer coaches are paramount to facilitate sessions and support new members. Indeed, recent data from UK Coaching's Coach Survey (2019) indicated that orienteering coaches make up a weighted representative sample of 3% of all sport coaches in the UK, demonstrating that an orienteering coaching workforce does exist and is needed to continue the sport's development.

In 2021, British Orienteering released their 'Thriving Clubs for a New Generation' strategic plan, which incorporates four strategic themes: (1) Change the perception; (2) Create engaging experiences; (3) Strengthen lifelong pathways; and (4) Provide foundations for success. Out of these strategic themes, 'Strengthen lifelong pathways' focuses on orienteering coaching and the need to ensure pathways exist encourage lifelong participation and involvement. Within this strategic theme, British Orienteering are keen to develop clear developmental pathways for their volunteers, which includes their coaches. Two strategic actions within this theme focus on creating clear coaching pathways to retain individuals within the sport, while also delivering effective and efficient training for volunteers within local club settings.

Furthermore, British Orienteering's vision for 2025 is to ensure that "orienteering is recognised as the 'go to' outdoor sport where people challenge themselves physically and mentally." Their mission for the sport is to "grow opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy orienteering and to reach their full potential in the sport whether as a competitor or as a volunteer," while their organisational mission is to "lead, govern, promote and develop orienteering in the UK." As such, three strategic programmes have been developed which focus

on: (1) increasing participation (increasing the numbers of people experiencing orienteering), (2) competitive orienteering (growing competition numbers); and (3) podium success (systemic and sustained success at senior and junior world orienteering championships). To achieve the strategic outcomes within the first (increasing participation) and last (podium success) of these strategic programmes, proposed areas of focus are to:

- Develop and support the club ‘volunteer’/coaching infrastructure to help retain participants; need for a clear participation pathway (increasing participation).
- Work with members to enhance their understanding of how world class athletes and coaches are developed (podium success).
- Strengthen the coaching infrastructure to support talent athletes (podium success).

Therefore, a common theme throughout these areas of focus is to enhance the current coaching infrastructure for both participation and high-performance orienteering coaches, of which coach education is a vital component. The assumption is made that meaningful coach education and development opportunities is likely to result in enhanced coaching practice, having a positive impact on increasing and maintaining participation, in addition to contributing towards podium success.

Research aim and questions:

The aim of this research is to critically analyse British Orienteering's coach education provision, while offering recommendations for future practice. In understanding coaches' and coach developers' experiences and perceptions of the existing pathway, it is believed more meaningful and appropriate learning opportunities can be designed and delivered in the future. To help address this broad research aim, three research questions have been developed:

1. What are coaches' experiences of, and perceptions towards, British Orienteering's current coach education pathway?
2. What are coach developers' experiences of, and perceptions towards, British Orienteering's current coach education pathway?
3. What can be added, modified, or removed, to enhance British Orienteering's future coach education provision?

Following on from this brief introduction, the next section outlines the methodological approach of this research project, explaining how data were collected and analysed. Participant information and analysis will also be provided.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach

Due to the designated aim and three research questions underpinning this project, a qualitative research approach was considered the most appropriate. Qualitative research is used to uncover perspectives, meaning, and understanding, specifically when a particular problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2013). Thus, this research aimed to critically analyse British Orienteering's coach education provision, while offering recommendations for future practice. Therefore, adopting a qualitative framework enabled the researcher to explore individual perspectives and experiences (i.e., coaches and coach developers) toward British Orienteering's current coach education pathway. Indeed, qualitative research places great emphasis on participants being able to articulate their personal views of reality, therefore, a specific research approach and subsequent research methods are needed to understand individuals' experiences, thoughts, and actions.

Data collection methods

As a result of the qualitative research approach chosen, a qualitative online survey was used to gather “nuanced, in-depth and sometimes new understandings of social issues” (Braun et al., 2021, p. 641). Qualitative online surveys are the dominant mode of survey research, which are designed and delivered via online survey software, while focusing on participants' responses to open-ended topic-based questions alongside a small number of closed, demographic questions. The emergence of web-based survey capabilities has resulted in qualitative online surveys becoming a popular data collection method for researchers due to ease of use and accessibility, reduced demand on time and resources, access to geographically distributed populations, and a heightened level of anonymity for participants (Braun et al., 2021). Qualitative online surveys offer the unique opportunity to collect a ‘wide-angle lens’ on a range of both broad and specific topic areas, helping to capture a diverse range of participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices (Braun et al., 2021). Consequently, in addressing the designated aim and research questions of this study, a qualitative online survey was considered an appropriate data collection method to understand coaches' perspectives towards British Orienteering's coach education provision.

A qualitative online survey was developed using Microsoft Forms and structured via nine sections, which was geared towards orienteering coaches. Before commencing the survey,

multiple participant information pages (Sections 1-4) were provided which included information related to the aims and background of the research, participant confidentiality, intended outcomes of the research, and survey completion instructions. Having read this information, participants progressed to Section 5 which contained a series of statements where participants were required to tick a box and digitally sign to give their informed consent. Participants were unable to access the rest of the survey if they did not provide their informed consent. Section 6 included the first set of questions related to demographic information. These involved a mixture of four open and closed questions regarding the participants' age, gender, country of residence, and ethnicity.

Section 7 focused on the participants' coaching background and general perspectives towards and experiences of British Orienteering's coach education pathway. This section included a combination of 11 open and closed questions to acquire information on who the participants were coaching (e.g., athlete age and level), participants' coaching qualifications, years of coaching experience, and their current coaching roles (e.g., number of sessions delivered weekly, and events attended monthly). Moreover, the section contained questions using a Likert scale to measure participants' positive and negative thoughts towards British Orienteering's coach education pathway, with supplementary open-ended questions to enable further expansion is desired (see Table 1).

Table 1. Online Survey – General questions on participants' perspectives towards and experiences of British Orienteering's coach education pathway (Section 7)

Questions
1. In general, how satisfied are you with British Orienteering's coach education provision in terms of accessibility e.g., cost, duration, location, frequency? 1 is the lowest (e.g., you not satisfied at all), 5 is the highest (e.g., you are very satisfied).
2. Broadly, to what extent do you believe that the British Orienteering coach education course(s) you have attended have impacted upon your learning and practice as a coach? 1 is the lowest (e.g., the courses have had no impact on your learning and practice), 5 is the highest (e.g., the courses have had a significant impact on your learning and practice).
3. Broadly, to what extent do you believe that the content within British Orienteering's coach education provision is relevant for your needs as a coach? 1 is the lowest (e.g., the content is not relevant at all), 5 is the highest (e.g., the content is highly relevant).
4. In comparison to coach education courses you have attended within other sports, how does British Orienteering's provision compare? 1 is the lowest (e.g., British Orienteering's courses are significantly worse), 5 is the highest (e.g., British

Orienteering's courses are significantly better). If you have not completed any other coach education courses, please do not answer.

5. If possible, please expand upon and explain any of the ratings given in the previous four questions.
 6. Please list three things you enjoy/like/find beneficial within British Orienteering's current coach education provision.
 7. Please list three things you do not enjoy/like/find beneficial within British Orienteering's current coach education provision.
-

Section 8 included five topic-based questions (Braun et al., 2021), geared specifically towards addressing the aim and three research questions, focusing on participants' detailed perspectives towards current provision and their recommended changes for any future courses (see Table 2). Section 9 concluded the survey with a final comments space, inviting participants to take part in a follow-up focus group where they would be able to discuss these topic areas in further depth and detail (see Table 3).

Table 2. Online Survey - Topic-based questions (Section 8)

Questions
1. In general, what are your current thoughts towards British Orienteering's coach education pathway and provision? Example topic areas to discuss might include accessibility, design and delivery structure, content, and assessment formats.
2. When reflecting on your experiences of British Orienteering's coach education pathway and provision, what aspects do you believe were missing/absent and should be included in any future courses?
3. When reflecting on your experiences of British Orienteering's coach education pathway and provision, what aspects did you enjoy the most and believe should remain in any future courses?
4. When reflecting on British Orienteering's current coach education pathway and provision, what recommended changes would you suggest are made? Please try to give as much detail as possible.
5. Broadly, how do you believe British Orienteering's coach education pathway should be structured? E.g., how many levels/courses? What additional CPD should be offered? Should courses be online?

Table 3. Online Survey - Final comments (Section 9)

Questions
8. Would you like to receive feedback on the overall results of the study? If you select Yes, an executive summary will be sent to the email address you provided earlier once the research project has been completed.

-
9. Would you be willing to take part in an optional follow-up focus group via Microsoft Teams? If you select Yes, in March-April 2023 you may receive an invitation sent to the email address you provided at the start of the survey to arrange the focus group at a convenient time/date.
 10. If you are interested in participating in a focus group, please select the days/times which would suit your schedule the best.
-

To supplement the survey data, focus groups were selected as an additional qualitative method to obtain more in-depth perspectives on the research's focus. In short, focus groups can be considered as organised discussions with a selected group of participants, to understand how they think or feel about an issue or idea. Specifically, focus groups are a useful method to adopt when looking for a range of ideas or feelings that people have about something, or when trying to understand differences in perspectives, as agreement/disagreement can help to provide real insight and experience. Consequently, focus groups were adopted to delve deeper into both coaches' and coach developers' thoughts and opinions on the current British Orienteering coach education pathway, knowing that a range of different experiences and beliefs would help to contribute to a fuller understanding, rather than attempting to reach a consensus.

Finally, in addition to the qualitative data collected via the online survey and focus groups, a process of document analysis took place. Specifically, this involved reviewing previous British Orienteering coach education documentations to understand the development of policy and curriculum i.e., what is considered as 'knowledge' and how has this changed over time. In total, five documents were examined, with extracts included throughout this report where relevant. The five analysed documents were:

- Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering (2016, 2 pages long)
- UKCC Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering: Information pack (2016, 15 pages long)
- Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (2016, 2 pages long)
- Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering: Coaching handbook (2022, 94 pages long)
- 1st4sport Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (QCF): Qualification Specification (2016, 47 pages long)

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the School of Education & Lifelong Learning at the University of East Anglia on February 21st, 2023 (Application ETH2223-1288). Following ethical approval, the lead author designed and developed initial drafts of the online survey, which were shared with British Orienteering staff and the Coaching Advisory Group members to ensure the correct terminology and phrasing was used to maximise clarity and reduce any ambiguity within each survey question. Having completed the final draft, the online survey became 'open' and went live on March 10th, 2023, with participants being recruited via two main methods. The primary method of participant recruitment was via email, as the link to the online survey was disseminated by British Orienteering to their mailing list of qualified coaches (circa 350 coaches). An email reminder was sent on multiple occasions to this mailing list throughout the duration of the online survey being live. The online survey was eventually closed and stopped accepting responses on May 26th, 2023. The survey was 'open' and live for a total of 11 weeks (77 days). In addition to the coaches' survey, a shorter survey was designed specifically for coach developers and was used primarily as a recruitment tool to invite coach developers to participate in a focus-group. The survey contained identical Section 1-7 as the coaches' survey, but also contained extra questions regarding participants' years of experiences with regards to delivering coach education courses. This survey was live for the same duration as the coaches' survey.

As outlined already, Section 9 of the coaches' survey and Section 8 of the coach developers' survey invited participants to take part in a follow-up focus group via Microsoft Teams where they would be able to expand upon their perspectives and experiences in more depth, while interacting with fellow coaches and coach developers. Towards the end of the survey duration, participants who outlined they would be willing to participate in a focus group were invited via email to a session at a date and time which suited their personal preference. The focus group questions were developed following an initial analysis of the survey data, with prominent topic areas or issues used as prompts to stimulate further reflection and comment. In total, four focus groups (three with coaches, one with coach developers) were conducted between April 18th, 2023, and May 30th, 2023.

Sampling and participants

Sampling within this research was broadly purposive (Braun & Clarke, 2013), as participants needed to be a qualified orienteering coach or coach developer in the UK who is over the age of 18. Nonetheless, due to the survey being disseminated to a large audience (e.g., British Orienteering’s mailing list), sampling involved both convenience-based (e.g., whoever completed the survey was recruited) and snowballing (e.g., participants may share the survey to individuals within their networks) strategies to increase the response count (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Indeed, sample size within qualitative survey research is not straightforward (Braun et al., 2021), ranging anywhere between 20 to over 100 responses. While bigger sample sizes do not always translate into better data (Braun et al., 2021), larger sample sizes may help compensate for shorter participant responses which might lack depth and detail. In total, 34 participants completed the online survey for coaches, while only 4 coach developers responded to their specific survey (although this was used primarily as a recruitment tool for the focus group).

Out of the 34 coaches’ who completed the survey, 21 indicated they would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group. Considering coaches’ preferred dates and times in addition the researcher’s own schedule, 15 coaches were invited to one of three focus groups sessions, with a total of eight (four male, four female) coaches attending. Furthermore, all four coach developers who completed their specific survey were invited to one focus group session, with a total of three coach developers attending (See Table 4). In total, the four focus groups lasted on average for 91minutes, with a range of 70 to 103 minutes.

Table 4. Focus group details

Date:	Participant group:	Number of participants:	Duration (mins):
18/04/2023	Coaches	2	96
25/04/2023	Coaches	2	93
26/04/2023	Coaches	4	103
30/05/2023	Coach developers	3	70

Participant analysis

Out of the 34 coaches who completed the survey, 20 identified as male (58%), while 14 identified as female (42%), with an average age of 62.3 (range 27-79). Across the participants, 33 identified as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (one individual preferred

not to say), with 27 based in England (79%), six in Scotland (18%), and one in Northern Ireland (3%).

In terms of their coaching background, 40.3% of the coaches' currently work with juniors between 5 and 17, however, the majority (43.28%) work with over 40-year-old orienteers (see Figure 1). Furthermore, when discussing the participants' coaching domain 56% indicated they work in development (e.g., intermediate athletes, more competition, local and/or regional events), 35% in participation (e.g., novice athletes, grassroots, local events, schools), and 9% within performance (e.g., elite athletes, national or international events). Participants stated that on average they had been coaching orienteering for 26.8 years (range 3-45), alongside coaching any sport for an average of 26.25 years. When considering their obtained coach education qualifications, there was an evident mix with participants completing multiple British Orienteering and Scottish Orienteering Association courses over time (See Figure 2). However, just over 32% of coaches indicated that they had completed the Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering delivered by British Orienteering, which was the most popular response.

Figure 1. Online survey – Participants' coaching domain

10. **Currently, what age groups are you primarily coaching orienteering to? By primarily, we are referring to the most frequent. You can tick multiple boxes.**

[More Details](#)

● 5 to 17 year olds	27
● 18 to 39 year olds	11
● 40 to 59 year olds	15
● 60+ year olds	14

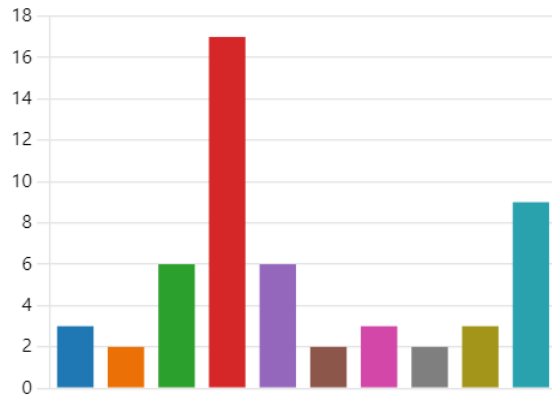


Figure 2. Online survey – Coaches’ qualifications

14. Do you hold any British Orienteering (BO) or Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA) coach education qualifications? You can tick multiple boxes.

[More Details](#)

● Teaching Orienteering Part 1 (BO)	3
● Teaching Orienteering Part 2 (BO)	2
● Level 1 Award in Coaching Ori...	6
● Level 2 Certificate in Coaching ...	17
● Level 3 Certificate in Coaching ...	6
● Coaching Foundation (SOA)	2
● Level 1 - Session Coach (SOA)	3
● Level 2 - Club Coach (SOA)	2
● Level 3 - Lead Coach (SOA)	3
● Other	9



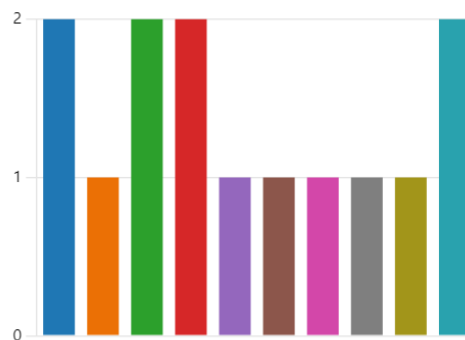
Due to the small sample size of coach developers, some demographic details will not be disclosed to maintain anonymity. Nonetheless, across the three coach developers who participated in the focus group, the average age was 72, with the participants working as a coach developer for an average of 20.5 years, delivering an average of 17 courses. The three coach developers had experience of delivering the full range of British Orienteering and Scottish Orienteering Association qualifications (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Coach education courses delivered by coach developers

15. Which of the following British Orienteering (BO) or Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA) coach education qualifications have you delivered as a coach developer? You can tick multiple boxes.

[More Details](#)

● Teaching Orienteering Part 1 (BO)	2
● Teaching Orienteering Part 2 (BO)	1
● Level 1 Award in Coaching Ori...	2
● Level 2 Certificate in Coaching ...	2
● Level 3 Certificate in Coaching ...	1
● Coaching Foundation (SOA)	1
● Level 1 - Session Coach (SOA)	1
● Level 2 - Club Coach (SOA)	1
● Level 3 - Lead Coach (SOA)	1
● Other	2



Data analysis

To analyse participants' responses to the online survey questions, thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis encompasses a form of qualitative data analysis which helps to identify patterns of meaning which exist across a dataset. Thematic analysis offers the potential for "nuanced, complex, and interpretative analysis," especially when used to understand people's experiences of, and perspectives towards, social issues (Braun et al., 2017, p. 191). Consequently, a *reflexive* approach to thematic analysis, which emphasises researcher subjectivity, was considered an appropriate analytical tool when interpreting participants' responses to the online qualitative survey (Braun & Clarke, 2022). *Reflexive* thematic analysis follows an iterative six-stage process, where the researcher progresses back and forth through stages: namely, familiarisation; coding; generating initial themes; reviewing and developing themes; refining, defining, and naming themes; and writing up.

Initially, the researcher immersed themselves within the data through reading and re-reading all 34 participant survey responses overtime to become familiar with the content and to achieve depth of engagement, looking for tentative ideas and concepts which may help to address the project's aim and designated research questions (Braun et al., 2017). These initial ideas and concepts were later used to develop specific questions and prompts for the focus groups. After an initial process of immersion and familiarisation, the survey dataset was coded in an unstructured, subjective, and organic manner, with both latent and semantic codes evolving and shifting over time as researcher understanding was developed (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Organised codes were then clustered together to form initial themes which represent patterns of meaning connected by a shared idea or concept (Braun et al., 2017). The first three phases were then repeated with the focus group data, allowing initial theme ideas to be modified and evolve. Hence, theme development continued with further refining, defining, and naming of themes to capture the core content within both the survey and focus group data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). These themes are presented within the findings and recommendations section which follows this methodology and are supported with data extracts and critical analytical commentary within this report (Braun et al., 2017).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction:

To address the research's aim and designated research questions, the survey and focus groups conducted with both coaches and coach developers attempted to understand participants' general experiences of attending British Orienteering coach education courses which exist in the current pathway. In addition to this, a key aspect was to explore participants' perceptions towards these courses i.e., what they enjoy and find beneficial, what they do not enjoy and find a hindrance, and their recommendations for future improvements. When completing the survey, prior to answering the topic-based questions (Section 8), participants were asked four broad questions (Section 7) which used a Likert scale to measure positive and negative thoughts towards a statement. Within the Likert scale, an answer of 1 represented the lowest response (i.e., a negative perception), while an answer of 5 represented the highest response possible (i.e., a positive perception). These questions are outlined below, followed by a concise summary of responses (See Figures 4 to 7).

Figure 4. Participants' general satisfaction towards British Orienteering's current coach education provision

15. In general, how satisfied are you with British Orienteering's coach education provision in terms of accessibility e.g., cost, duration, location, frequency? 1 is the lowest (e.g., you not satisfied at all), 5 is the highest (e.g., you are very satisfied).

[More Details](#)

 Insights

3.19
Average Rating

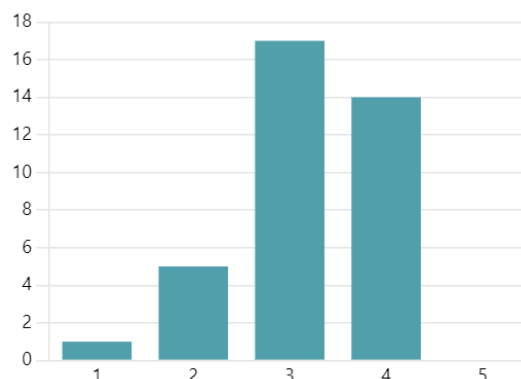


Figure 5. Participants' perceptions towards whether British Orienteering's current coach education provision has impacted upon their learning as a coach

16. Broadly, to what extent do you believe that the British Orienteering coach education course(s) you have attended have impacted upon your learning and practice as a coach? 1 is the lowest (e.g., the courses have had no impact on your learning and practice), 5 is the highest (e.g., the courses have had a significant impact on your learning and practice).

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

3.78
Average Rating

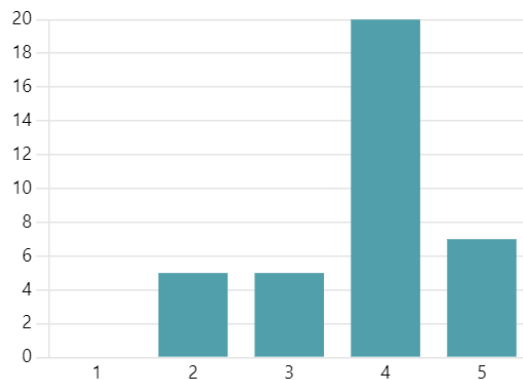


Figure 6. Participants' perceptions towards whether British Orienteering's current coach education provision is relevant for their needs as a coach

17. Broadly, to what extent do you believe that the content within British Orienteering's coach education provision is relevant for your needs as a coach? 1 is the lowest (e.g., the content is not relevant at all), 5 is the highest (e.g., the content is highly relevant).

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

3.51
Average Rating

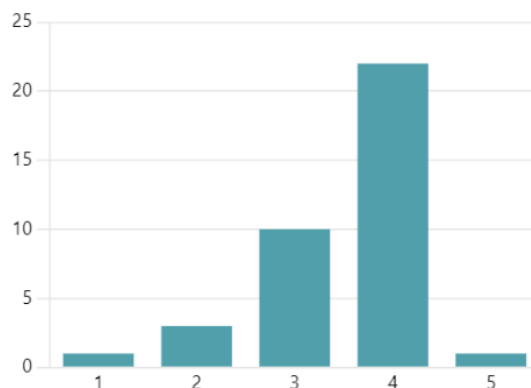
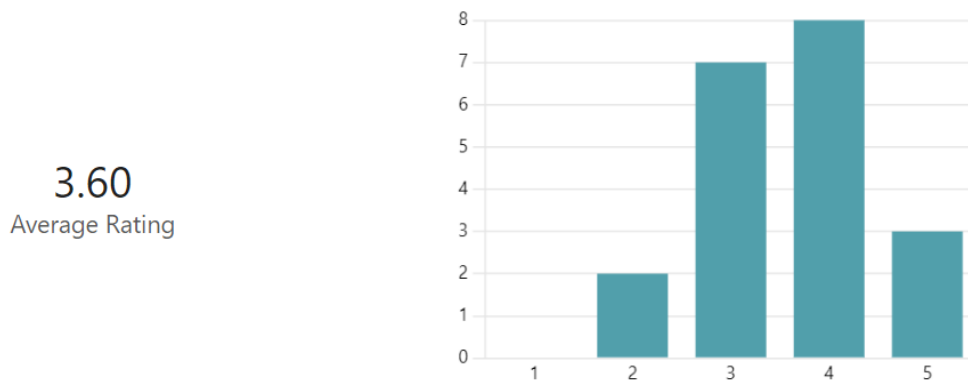


Figure 7. Participants’ perceptions towards whether British Orienteering’s current coach education provision is better or worse when compared to other sports’ coach education courses

18. In comparison to coach education courses you have attended within other sports, how does British Orienteering's provision compare? 1 is the lowest (e.g., British Orienteering's courses are significantly worse), 5 is the highest (e.g., British Orienteering's courses are significantly better). If you have not completed any other coach education courses, please do not answer.

[More Details](#)

 Insights



When briefly analysing the results from these four Likert questions, a response range of 3.19 or 63.8% (general satisfaction) to 3.78 or 75.6% (impact of learning) is evident. Furthermore, on average, participants’ perspectives towards British Orienteering’s current coach education provision in terms of their satisfaction, courses impacting their learning, courses meeting their needs, and comparison to other sports’ coach education can be quantified as 3.52/5, 70.4%, or a 7/10 rating. While only a snapshot and self-reported, the quantitative data suggests that overall, participants have more positive than negative perceptions towards, and experiences of, British Orienteering’s coach education provision. The biggest take away is perhaps that participants have indicated that the current course offerings are positively impacting upon their learning in some way (75.6%), despite the general satisfaction of provision being low at 63.8%. However, while this quantitative data provides indication of the ‘what,’ qualitative analysis of the survey’s topic-based questions and focus group discussions will provide more in depth and contextualised data.

Review of current coach education provision: Participant responses

Following the thematic analysis process undertaken on the qualitative survey data and focus group transcriptions, five primary themes were developed: (1) Accessibility of coach

education; (2) Promotion, dissemination, and awareness of coach education; (3) Participant interaction and practical delivery; (4) Assessment procedures and the role of coach developers; and (5) Content and structure of current provision. These themes aim to represent the core ideas, concepts, and topic areas in relation to participants' perceptions and experiences of British Orienteering's coach education provision. This following section uses data extracts within each of the five themes alongside analytical commentary to illuminate the views and arguments presented by coaches and coach developers.

Accessibility of coach education

A recurring theme throughout the analysis of the survey responses was the issue of accessing British Orienteering delivered coach education provision. Specifically, it was argued that most courses are geographically constrained and delivered infrequently, making it difficult for coaches to attend without significant sacrifice and effort.

I completed the L2 coaching course in 2018. I did this to obtain the appropriate insurances to run coaching sessions for my club. I had to travel to Bristol area to complete the course (3-hour drive) and stay locally for the weekends that the course ran. It was my responsibility to source a qualified coach assessor able to complete my practical assessment work. There was very little choice. My assessor had to come from the other side of London. Completing the process took more time than hoped. Subsequently, I have investigated the Teaching Orienteering Pt1 and Pt2 qualifications. These have proved too difficult to undertake as there seems no clear pathway for their completion. (Participant 24, Survey)

I mean, I know people in my club. A couple of guys [who are doing their Level 2] ... it's just been the logistics again; it's been hard to get finished and I was kind of coming to finish it but it's just within the kind of like timescale and I kind of look at it and go 'but are you going to want to do coaching after that'. Because you know you've got to fit it in with everything else that you do and what context is it going to be? (Jasmine, FG2)

Most training courses are infrequent and geographically constrained. Most people are not keen on driving hundreds of miles for a one-day course run every two years. More use could be made of teaching theory using the BOF eLearning schemes. The online "event safety" course is a good model for theory training. Most BOF roles need an element of face-to-face practical instruction, this would be more time efficient if the theory had been dealt with on line first. (Participant 27, Survey)

In building upon Participant 27's suggestion, the enhanced use of online coach education was proposed as a solution to provide more regular and accessible provision.

Coach education could be more flexible and accessible using e.g., on-line learning, on-line tutorials, 'work-based' teaching and or assessment, accreditation of prior learning. (Participant 33, Survey)

However, to provide enhanced online coach education opportunities, alterations need to be made to British Orienteering's current website and booking system, as several individuals have issues either enrolling or accessing course advertisements.

I get enquiries from teachers who want to get going but they do not seem to book onto the current online courses though I don't know why- something must act as a barrier. The frequency of courses, or a route to build momentum to get enough participants to run courses in the regions seems to be missing. (Participant 26, Survey)

It's difficult to get the appropriate training easily, in appropriate timescales, or within reach. It is difficult to encourage others to take part in coaching training. Administratively, I regularly miss out on coaching training opportunities as my details keep falling off BOF's system. (Participant 28, Survey)

Indeed, even within elite and high-performance orienteering contexts, it was suggested that there remain several unqualified coaches working at the top end of the sport. However, it was again argued that this might simply be down to restricted opportunities to access formal coach education.

TL: It was kind of more an observation that there might be unqualified coaches coaching at a high level. And if that's kind of an issue or not?

I wouldn't be surprised. Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised just because of, again, accessibility. We don't all have the time to go out and get all these qualifications done and if they've got the experience and they're doing fine, then happy days. (Val, FG2)

In summary, participants believed that the current British Orienteering coach education pathway lacks accessibility. This is a problem at the grassroots level, but also for high-performance coaches, some of which are coaching at an elevated level despite possessing limited qualifications. The issue with accessibility primarily stems from a lack of courses being delivered in the first instance (potentially due to a limited coach developer workforce), in addition to the geographical dispersal of course locations. While acknowledging that orienteering specific coach education needs to be delivered in an appropriate and contextual environment, there is a need to reflect on the regularity and decisions behind course venues to try and access all reaches of the UK.

Promotion, dissemination, and awareness of coach education

While very much linked to the previous theme on accessibility, within the survey responses many participants alluded to a general lack of awareness about the coach education and development opportunities that British Orienteering offer. It was suggested that course availability is rarely disseminated and poorly advertised to coaches.

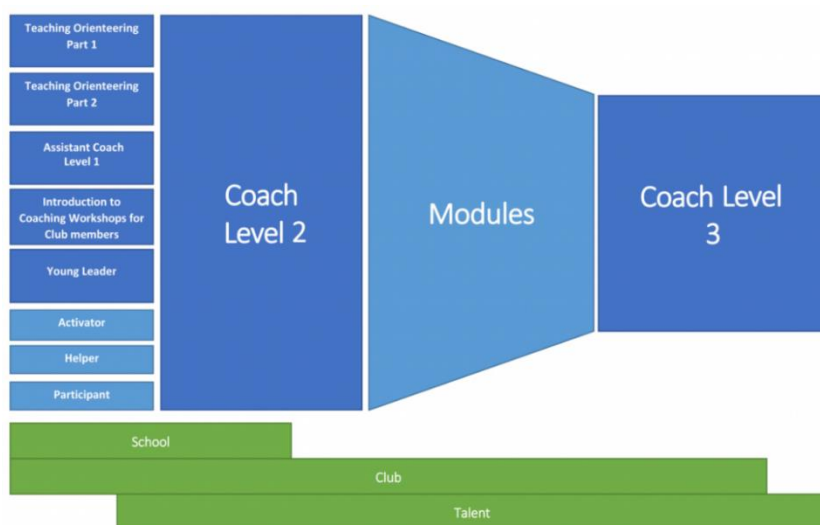
Not very 'public' what is available, seems to depend on a few people expressing interest and then it's arranged? (Participant 17, Survey)

Coaching courses are not often widely advertised, so it is hit and miss when trying to find one for interested parties. Locations are widespread. More central advertising would help. (Participant 29, Survey)

It is all a bit mysterious unless you try hard to keep up. We are low in numbers, so it is hard to generate enough critical mass of enthusiasm to keep things going or get things started. I know of several experienced people who have given up or not bothered to start because it seems overly bureaucratic to keep going. (Participant 36, Survey)

Alongside poor dissemination and advertisement of available courses, participants suggested that a lack of clarity with regards to the current coach education pathway could potentially be a barrier for individuals who wish to enrol on a qualification. For example, participants suggested that the current pathway (see Figure 8) advertised on the British Orienteering website is unclear and does not reflect what is delivered.

Figure 8. British Orienteering's current coach education pathway



Indeed, participants argued that Figure 8 is confusing, especially for new coaches who wish to obtain their first Level 1 qualification. The presentation of the pathway requires greater structure, so it is clear what the trajectory and journey through the qualifications looks like. Furthermore, it was suggested that courses listed on the pathway e.g., the modules and Level 3, no longer exist and contribute further to a lack of understanding with regards to which courses are available (and when).

The last course I attended was Coaching in Remote areas, back in 2017, which was run by JROS rather than BO. I am unaware what the pathway is meant to consist of? There is a diagram on the BOF coaches page, which describes 1) A variety of first steps, 2) Coach Level 2, 3) Modules, 4) Coach Level 3, I believe this to be a fantasy. There are no Modules listed, and the only one I have ever been pointed to is the Coaching in Remote Areas. My understanding is that Coach Level 3 course was only ever run once over a decade ago. (Participant 25, Survey)

Accessibility - in finding and encouraging new people to become coaches I have interest in the day/information course then there is a huge drop out (80%). Those who are left undertake the next level then there is further drop out. Out of a possible 15-20 starters I have been left with 2-3 who go on and so far, only 1-2 of them have completed. Presentation - look at the SOA website - it is so straightforward, tells you what is needed how much each level costs, what to do next with who to contact. I nearly took on the SOA coaching set up when I managed to get some help from coaches in England (not BO!). (Participant 35, Survey)

Yeah. In terms of the diagram, I'd echo Claire's thoughts that I think there is an obvious imbalance in terms of where the majority of coaches are finding themselves and the amount of coach education that goes on is pretty much indicative of that Level 1. I think there is an issue with the way that is presented. There's a lot going on at level one. And so, if I was looking at that as a beginner coach, I'd be saying, well, which of this plethora of options are really relevant and appropriate to me? Should I be doing the teaching parts one and two? How does that differ to an assistant coach Level 1? So that would be quite confusing to me and obviously I have to then pursue each of those elements to find out what's going on with all of them. I think I never like a diagram that goes sideways rather than a pyramid that goes upwards because that tends to indicate that it's a flat line and clearly, it's not meant to be that. And yeah, I'm also confused about what do we mean by modules. What's that meant to represent? A joiner between coach Level 2 and Level 3? (Peter, FG3)

Consequently, participants within this research feel strongly that future coach education provision needs to be more accessible, advertised and disseminated appropriately, while having a clear, well-structured pathway that is understandable to coaches of all levels. Any courses or learning opportunities promoted on British Orienteering's website need to firstly exist, while ensuring adequate information is available so coaches are fully aware of any course's cost, format, and coordination.

Participant interaction and practical delivery

In moving beyond course coordination such as accessibility and promotion, when reflecting on their experiences of attending and engaging with British Orienteering's current coach education provision, many participants indicated clearly that their favourite aspects often revolved around practical delivery and participant interaction.

Practical sessions and practical assessment. (Participant 3, Survey)

Practical sessions which enable coaches to understand why linked sessions are good practice; the chance to share ideas and good practice. (Participant 10, Survey)

Practical focus. Learning from genuinely knowledgeable tutors. Interaction with (and learning from) peers. (Participant 18, Survey)

Practical coaching sessions with feedback. (Participant 24, Survey)

Interactive workshops, practical experience with others. (Participant 29, Survey)

Learning from other coaches, new ideas. (Participant 32, Survey)

Ideas for practical sessions, including practical sessions within the course/assessment. (Participant 34, Survey)

Participation in practical sessions where learners can easily coach or be 'coached' within contextualised situations is only possible within in person formats. Moreover, engaging with fellow learners face-to-face enables a fluid exchange of ideas while encouraging peer learning. Hence, some participants indicated a preference towards in person coach education courses.

Definitely better in person / handbook is great / good mix of technical and physical training I generally think the course is great but it's more the expectation off the back of it and ongoing support which is unclear. (Participant 8, Survey)

The "teaching how to coach" was extremely useful for me. The sets of example exercises were good. The in-person tutor led training sessions. (Participant 19, Survey)

In SOA current coach education - in person assessment session, learning about other's experiences, tips for specific sessions from experienced coaches. (Participant 33, Survey)

Although a short and condensed theme, the key message here is that coaches enjoy practical, in person opportunities to engage with peers and course content within coach education

provision. While this is expected, moving forwards it is important to reflect upon how meaningful opportunities for face-to-face learning and interactions can be facilitated in an accessible and manageable way for learners, given the barriers and issues discussed within the previous two themes.

Assessment procedures and the role of coach developers

To design and deliver meaningful coach education courses, coach developers play a paramount role in facilitating coach learning. As such, coach developers have the potential to inspire coaches to hone their craft and engage with course content enthusiastically. For Participant 8, their coach developer adopted a mentoring role and encouraged them to strive for higher standards.

Really enjoyed the content and structure. Having a mentor is the best way to navigate this path and I had a good mentor. Having a really experienced assessor/well known coach was also inspiring but made me work harder to complete the course to a high standard. (Participant 8, Survey)

In building upon this sentiment, Participant 17 also outlined how they valued having a coach developer with significant coaching experience and knowledge while completing their Level 2. In addition to finding the content relevant, this individual enjoyed the assessment format.

In general, the topics for Level 2 were fine, I just found the digital format very unwieldy and ended up printing that big document anyway. Assessment formats were fine, and I quite enjoyed doing them actually. Main trainer was very good and knows his stuff- had been coaching high-level in BOF for a long time. (Participant 17, Survey)

However, some participants suggested that assessment formats (at least at Level 2) would be more accessible if structured coaching sessions were occurring more regularly at regional events. Due to the fluid nature of orienteers, it was argued that delivering 4-linked sessions can prove problematic at times, despite the ethos and sentiment behind the assessment being recognised.

Assessment opportunities would be far easier for all concerned if there were more structured coaching sessions happening more regularly at regional level events. (Participant 15, Survey)

The level 2 delivery model (2 days learning, then 1 assessment, then experience, then final assessment) seems to work well. It would be good to have more flexibility in the third day timing. Also, weekends are precious, so if there was the opportunity to run the course as a series of evenings, which might encourage more attendees. If you can find a tutor.... Delivering the linked sessions can be tricky, given the transient availability of athletes. The same group rarely attends, unlike with a sport such as swimming or football. Maybe trainee coaches need to advertise “a series of 4 sessions, sign up to all 4, to help me get qualified” to their clubs, rather than “coaching to help new orienteers” ... The assessment format is good, as it covers all the elements. There is an assumption that a suitable group of “athletes” is available to be coached; this can be tricky to engineer. It’s not as easy as finding a 15 strong football squad. Again, an assessment session could be advertised before/after a local event, to find athletes to be coached. (Participant 29, Survey)

This theme reiterates the role and importance of the coach developer in facilitating and supporting coach learning (and motivation) within formal coach education provision. Indeed, it has already been argued that British Orienteering’s current coach education pathway lacks accessibility, in part due to a restricted coach developer workforce. It would seem pertinent that growing the body of coach developers should coincide with the need to increase the coaching population. Furthermore, while potentially out of British Orienteering’s control, coaches discussed some of the associated challenges with completing their Level 2 coach education assessment. Given the transient nature of orienteers in comparison to other sports, it might be worth reflecting on current assessment formats and whether they are appropriate in terms of meeting course outcomes, while enabling coaches to demonstrate competency in a relevant manner.

Content and structure of current provision

Having discussed aspects around course accessibility, practical delivery and assessments, alongside the role of the coach developer, this final theme focuses on the current content and structure of British Orienteering’s coach education courses. Several coaches begrudged the bureaucratic and overly ‘paper’ driven nature of courses, which were perceived to be a significant barrier to obtaining qualification.

The amount of form filling required to qualify is a very significant barrier. I filled in something like 130 pages of A4 to qualify as a Level 2 coach. The effort in getting and maintaining a qualification is very significant and it is unclear what the real benefits are to the coach in saying current. E.g., you could put on a club training session and

give out advice without needing to be a qualified coach (even if you were). (Participant 19, Survey)

Structure and content - well-meaning but not sure if this is Sport England or BO but whoever its far too 'academic' - too much paperwork for a practical outdoor sport. Overall structure - there could be other coach levels for specialists e.g., Sprint Coach, National squad level. Mental training etc. (Participant 35, Survey)

Because I think the content was good, but it was the actual... how it's administered or how it's... What you've got to do to get the piece of paper, basically was quite fluffy. (Jasmine, FG2)

There's a lot of work for a Level 2. So, I know some people have started it because you get you do 2 days in class and then you go away and then you come back, and you have to do another 1/2 day at another point. I give more lessons, which is fine. That's really good experience and stuff. But then all the workbook that they have... Now I have a lot of people that aren't that motivated to do all the stuff in the workbook... I was on with three other people, one of them didn't finish it because she just wasn't motivated enough to be able to think outside the box and then do all the paperwork for it. It was a big ask for a Level 2. (Val, FG2)

At the moment it's everything seems to be a very big hurdle to get over and when you've got over the hurdle, you're sort of pretty much left to your own devices anyway. (Bob, FG3)

Moreover, the overlaps and contradictions between the pathways and courses offered by British Orienteering and the Scottish Orienteering Association added unnecessary confusion to coaches. This, coupled with the fact British Orienteering's previous courses were aligned to the UKCC framework created a disjointed structure which hinders rather than facilitates coaches' progression through the pathway.

On a UK basis the system has become a disjointed mess. The confusions, contradictions and overlaps between the SOA and BOF offers are damaging. We need, as a matter of high priority, a single qualification system for the whole UK. The theory and practise of teaching orienteering is the same the world over and having separate pathways within BOF is a wasteful nonsense. BOF keep the records of our qualifications on a database which is visible by club officials. The BOF database records and displays only a small selection of qualifications; even some courses run by BOF themselves are not shown. A better impression of the talents available to a club would be given if the BOF database displayed all relevant qualifications such as I listed above under Question 14. These qualifications would be verifiable by the member sending an electronic photocopy to the BOF office. We do not understand why orienteering qualifications are being tied to external bodies such as UKCC or SQA. These external organisations know nothing about orienteering. The experts on orienteering instruction are the members of BOF. (Participant 31, Survey)

These issues have caused inherent structural problems within the current pathway, which in some cases is causing coaches to disengage with formal coach education opportunities. Nonetheless, while challenging the current structure, participants outlined specific content areas they feel would be beneficial to include within any future coach education provision. Participants suggested that more sport science-based content related to physiology, psychology, and periodisation should be included.

Most of the orienteering training up to Level 2 is on the technical side of things. Learning how to read a map etc. So, there's very little of the physical stuff and nutrition... I don't know how much these courses offer an understanding of how people think in orienteering, it would be great to put more of that content in. But as I said at beginning, there isn't very much. (Nigel, FG1)

Within the time available they are ok. But there is nothing about the differences in coaching girls/women and boys/men. There is nothing really about the concept of total coaching and the importance of physical development/fitness training. Orienteering is a tough sport. (Participant 5, Survey)

I don't think this was completely absent, but maybe a bit more about performance psychology- as it affects all levels- and how to mitigate the effects. I think this is something quite particular to orienteering. Maybe more about coaching for adults/senior's vs juniors. Coaching non-beginners but who still need a lot of development. (Participant 17, Survey)

LTAD considerations, particularly when working with gifted and talented athletes, as there is a dearth of high-level coaches in the UK who really understand and know how to deliver to regional+ level athletes. (Participant 22, Survey)

Alongside sport science-based topics geared towards high-performance orienteering coaching, participants also called for content which was more 'suited to the masses', potentially relating to basic instructional and evaluation techniques, while suggesting that content should split to target coaches who are working with either adults or juniors.

There should be a recognition by the governing bodies that basic instruction is required in the navigation skills before coaching is introduced. This is sport for the masses and not the elites. (Participant 33, Survey)

More about using online resources for training/evaluation of performance. (Participant 34, Survey)

I mean in general, I probably prefer working with adults rather than juniors, although I'm doing my coaching with juniors at the moment. So specific kinds of approaches for

adults who've been orienteering quite a long time, but still need coaching because I think that's kind of like a really important area to cover. I think coaching is often too focused just on the kind of junior end. (Jasmine, FG2)

While providing suggested topic areas to embed within formal coach education provision is useful, it was acknowledged that such courses represent only one aspect of coach learning and development within orienteering. Indeed, it was argued that more credence should be given to the regional and national squads, who could play a significant role in supporting the delivering of any provision. Drawing upon the expertise of these individuals may help to bridge the divide between the 'elites' and the 'masses' while creating coherency within the talent pathway.

It's not all about courses indeed the courses and qualifications are a small part of coach development - I think the regional and national squads could play an important role in motivating, accommodating, and educating coaches. Coaches work in different positions within the various teams and squads but there's no guidelines about the roles and responsibilities of each and few if any specific coach education opportunities - workshops etc. As someone who acts as a personal coach to junior and senior elite athletes, I've found the relationships with national level squads and teams to be very difficult. The programs tend to be very prescriptive and the content often unhelpful for individual athletes with different needs and circumstances. (Participant 9, Survey)

Thus, there is an opportunity to explore the extent to which high-performance orienteer coaches might support the design and delivery of formal coach education provision to bridge the divide between club and regional/national coaching. This section has attempted to highlight participants' current thoughts towards British Orienteering's coach education pathway, while capturing their improvements and suggestions moving forwards. Building upon these sentiments, three primary recommendations are made to British Orienteering to enhance future coach education provision. These recommendations are once again supported by data extracts from both coaches and coach developers, to help provide a rationale and justification for their inclusion in any future discussions and plans.

Recommendation 1: (Re)introducing Level 1 and 3 coach education provision

Introduction

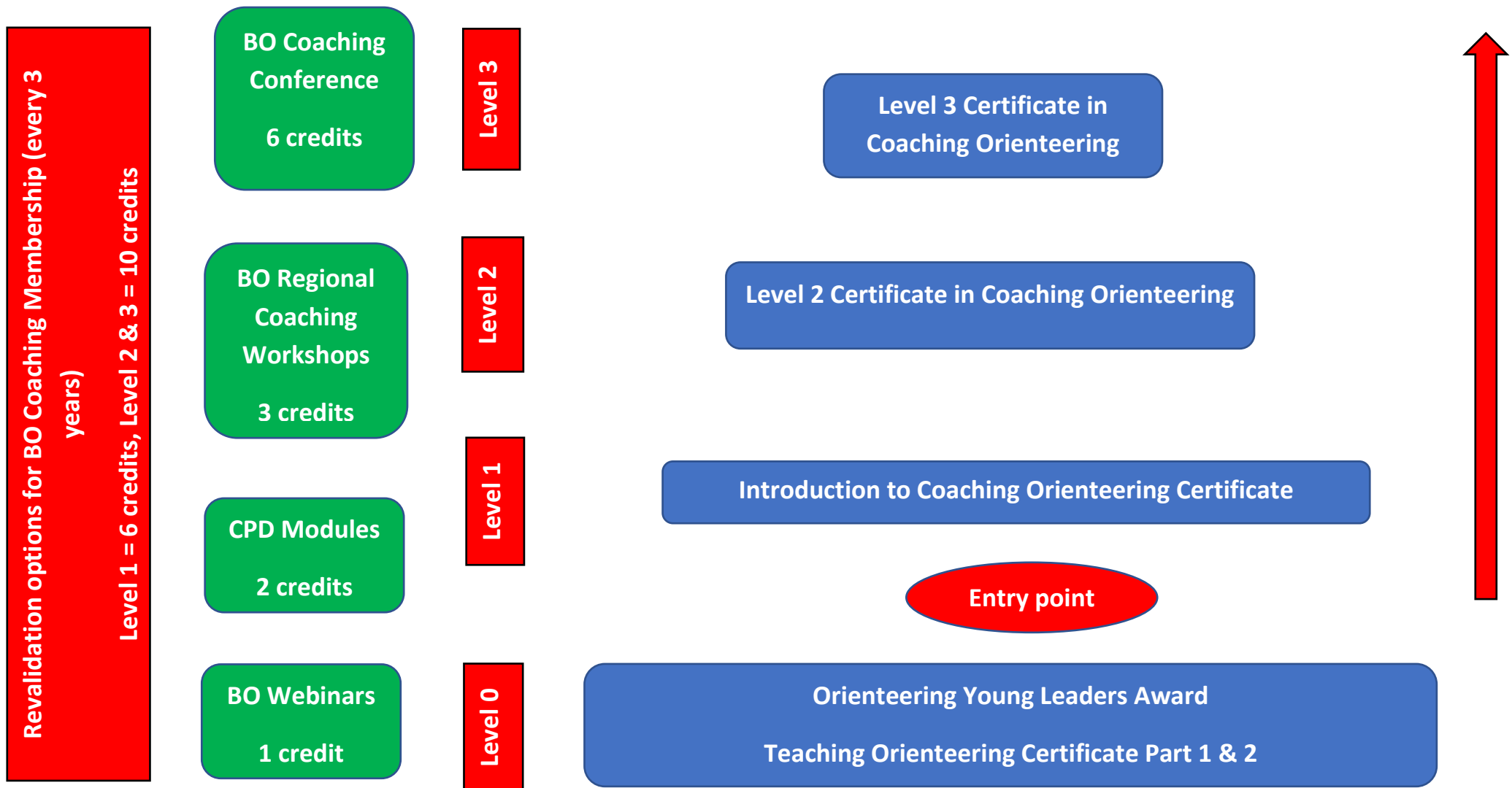
When reflecting on the developed themes from participants' responses so far, the most significant issue with British Orienteering's current coach education pathway refers to the inherent lack of clarity and structure with regards to what is advertised on the website (see Figure 8). While questions have been raised about the accessibility, content, and format of provision, participants remain unclear as to what the next logical step on the coaching pathway is, and what knowledge and competency is required to progress. Indeed, when asking participants within the survey to outline three things they do not like about the current pathway, Participant 7 responded with:

Structure, no L1 and no L3. Teaching Orienteering is suitable for schools, clubs and outdoor centres and could become L1 or foundation level. Could offer assessment. L2 become core coach. (Participant 7, Survey)

Thus, while provision at Level 2 was well received despite some structural concerns, it was suggested by participants that further content was needed at both Level 1 and Level 3, to help develop a linear and more progressive pathway for coaches. It is acknowledged that Level 1 and 3 British Orienteering coach education courses have existed previously but have either been renamed and split up into separate modules, or simply not been delivered for some time (see Figure 8). However, in building upon the ideas and sentiments of both coaches and coach developers, there would appear to be a need to reintroduce these courses to provide meaningful formal learning opportunities at both the introductory and high-performance level. The following section outlines the opinions of coaches and coach developers on the reintroduction of Level 1 and 3 coach education courses, while briefly discussing potential formats and content areas, although this is open to interpretation and more detail discussion. Taking these perspectives into consideration, a new coach education pathway for British Orienteering has been proposed (see Figure 9), which will be justified and explained throughout the remaining sections of the findings and recommendations chapter.

Figure 9. British Orienteering – 2025 Proposed Pathway

Coaches need to revalidate their BO Coaching Membership every 3 years by obtaining the relevant number of credits or completing the next qualification on the pathway



Developing an Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate

When revisiting the current British Orienteering coach education pathway (see Figure 8), it is unclear what the starting point might be for a coach and what differentiates the current options at that level. To help resolve this, the Orienteering Young Leaders Award and the Teaching Orienteering Certificate Part 1 & 2 have been classified as Level 0. While such courses are well received and useful due to their specific focus (e.g., young orienteers, individuals working as teachers) they do not represent that start of the new proposed coaching pathway and can be viewed as standalone ‘optional’ courses individuals may wish to enrol on. Instead, the development of a new Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate (ICOC) will represent the starting point of the formal coach education pathway as a Level 1 qualification. When considering who a Level 1 coach might be and what they might need to know, the following brief overview is proposed:

ICOC (Level 1) coach – role and characteristics:

- This individual will have a basic knowledge of coaching (i.e., roles and responsibilities of a coach, planning and delivering sessions, reflecting on sessions, questioning and feedback, the ‘how’ to coach).
- This individual will have a basic technical knowledge of orienteering (i.e., orienteering step system, equipment, placing controls and marking maps, compass use, risk assessment, the ‘what’ to coach).
- This individual will have basic knowledge of physical conditioning (i.e., warm up and cool downs, physical demands of orienteering).
- This individual can support Level 2 coaches within club settings and deliver sessions on their own, across varied terrains and environments. These sessions are likely to be delivered individually, rather than part of a series of linked sessions within a block of work.
- This individual’s predominant target audience will be athletes (adults and children) who might be new to the sport or competing at a recreational level i.e., those operating within the participation or development domain.

The focus on needing to possess a basic knowledge of three core areas (coaching, orienteering, and physical conditioning) aims to provide a more appropriate and accessible introduction

course for individuals. What a 'basic' understanding and knowledge base of these three topic areas involves requires further discussion and deliberation amongst British Orienteering staff and the Coaching Advisory Group, however, content from the previously delivered UKCC Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering could be modified and tweaked. The fourth bullet point above is the most significant. It is proposed that obtainment of the ICOC will enable coaches to deliver sessions within their club environment without the need for a Level 2 coach to be present. For many participants, this current insurance issue is a barrier for many individuals who wish to pursue a career in orienteering coaching i.e., the Level 2 is too technical and beyond what they need, however, without it they will not be able to coach on their own. Once again, coaches suggested that the current pathway is geared towards elite or at least more technical orienteering coaching, which is not relevant to the needs of many who operate within local club environments.

*I coach the primary school aged children at ***** with no ambition to do anything else. It feels as if most of the provision is not really aimed at people like me - it's heavily focused on coaching those on the pathways to being elite. The changes over the last few years also make my Level 1 qualification almost worthless in terms of restrictions on what I can do. (Participant 2, Survey)*

As a purely amateur coach, any cost and time required for training is a burden so has to be worthwhile. BOF's training and requirements tend to reflect a professional coach set-up and seem out of proportion for my needs. Coach education (paying training fees) can consume a large proportion of our local coaching budget, and some coaches spend more time keeping their qualifications up to date than they do coaching. (Participant 18, Survey)

My experience is that you had to start at Level 2 because I think Sidney pointed out you pretty much couldn't do any orienteering or any coherent thing outside of school grounds or the playing field unless you'd achieve Level 2. So that everyone that is Level 1 is automatically kind of disregarded by any kind of serious coach if you like. (Bob, FG3)

When reviewing previous documentation, it is clear that British Orienteering's alignment with the UKCC framework has created a situation where in short, unless a coach possesses a Level 2 qualification, being able to deliver any coaching practice is difficult. Orienteering coaches who have completed the current (or previous) UKCC Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering are restricted in terms of where they can go i.e., the location or site of coaching practice, in

addition to who they can coach i.e., participant competition level, and who must be present i.e., a Level 2 coach (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. UKCC Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering Information Pack (2016, p. 8)

What can a UKCC Endorsed Level 1 Coach Do?

By achieving this certificate you will be able to deliver orienteering sessions in grade A and B areas

http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/downloads/documents/cdoc_areatypes.pdf

The following summarises the characteristics of these areas;

Type of Area	Characteristics of Area
A - Private "safe" areas such as School or Outdoor Centre grounds	Small and "simple" areas with very clear boundaries, good access, plenty of handrail features such as paths or fences and so small as to allow supervision of the participants at frequent intervals. An absence of all such hazards as busy traffic, crags, fast or deep water
B - "Other" local areas and small woods	Areas with clear boundaries, good access, plenty of handrail features such as paths or fences and small enough for supervision of participants at regular intervals. An absence of obvious hazards such as busy traffic, crags, fast or deep water
C - Training on other areas which are neither complex nor exposed	Appropriate areas include easier forests or easier country parks and sites with clear boundaries and ready access for assistance or for emergency vehicles.
D - Training on more demanding areas	Complex, exposed or mountainous areas should be avoided except where sufficient staffing expertise is present.

Also, coach the skills and techniques up to and including Technical Difficulty 3 (TD3) on the British Orienteering Step System; see next page and check http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/downloads/documents/cdoc_LogbookStepSystem.pdf

This will include being able to prepare for a coaching session, deliver prepared activities and evaluate the effectiveness of the activities you are coaching. The course has been designed to allow you to get to grips with 'how to coach', applying it to orienteering skills and techniques.

Level 1 coaches in most other UKCC endorsed sports are assistant coaches and cannot work alone. Orienteering has included elements of safety and risk assessment into the course to allow coaches to work within the remit of British Orienteering Safety Guidelines. The restriction is in the graded area (A and B) and the use of resources (coaching cards) to determine the activities.

Hence, to be considered as worthwhile, coaches who possess the proposed ICOC must be allowed to deliver orienteering coaching practices on their own, without the need for a Level 2 to be present, in a more varied set of 'coaching environments'. While this would ensure that the ICOC as a Level 1 qualification would be a more attractive and meaningful qualification for individuals, it would also reduce the current burden or workload of Level 2 coaches. This aspect was discussed within the third focus group.

The level one if someone does that, would they then be able to deliver a club coaching session without the Level 2 coach? At the moment the problem I'm finding is that we've actually got quite a few coaches, but at level 2, but they're not all keen to turn up and coach and basically what they need to do at a club session is, is practice, develop one exercise on one skill set that lasts 20 minutes and it doesn't need me to be there, but in order to get insurance cover at the moment to run the club coaching session you have to have a Level 2 coach there. You can't just have the Level 1 and if you want to have an insured session which is an issue holding us back, we can't. I've got to be there at each one and I haven't got that time to give. Whereas if we had a whole load of Level 1s, they could do one session, one could do one week and somebody else could do the next week. They don't need to be linked; they just need to be able to deliver one session. But at the moment they can't because your insurance doesn't cover it. So, I think that's a big hole. (Claire, FG3)

*I mean, I think it's probably the most critical part of that early pathway for orienteers and for clubs, you know, that insurance issue it's the same issue we've got in the club here. I'm expected to cover pretty much the whole of *****, you can't run coherent coaching like that there's just one person that's got to jet around the place. (Bob, FG3)*

Therefore, the proposed new ICOC course would help to develop a new generation of orienteering coaches who are insured to deliver sessions, while also possessing the basic competency and knowledge across three key topic areas to facilitate athlete learning. Indeed, it has been argued that the current pathway represents too big of a jump between Level 1 and Level 2, which is a barrier preventing further enrolment. The Level 2 is the only 'meaningful' coach education qualification at present; thus, many coaches go directly to this course while bypassing the existing introductory courses. They do this out of necessity yet find the content to be pitched at a level beyond their current coaching needs.

1) Too big a step to the first qualification level, so off putting for tentative potential coaches. 2) Courses are not offered frequently enough, and the attendance fees are often high. 3) Far too many people complete the course and then do not go on to use it in a practical way. (Participant 14, Survey)

I believe that the current pathway has too big a step onto the pathway. The Introduction to Coaching is good for welcoming beginners, but there is no opportunity to lead a session until you reach Level 2. The option to run sessions for TD1-3 in a local park

should be more readily available; a new Level 1? At this level, the coaches don't need to be able to deliver the physical element or the TD4-5 skills, as they are teaching basic orienteering technique. They still need the "how to coach" element... The content of Level 2 seems comprehensive but goes beyond what many coaches will use, see my comments above. It is a hard sell to many orienteers, who are only interested in coaching near-beginners (children or adult). (Participant 29, Survey)

It looks like [the current coach education pathway] the big bit is coach Level 3 and Level 2 and there's like that tiny little bit with all the Level 1 beginners' kind of size and really the balance should be way the other way... the way it stands at the moment, it's kind of like Level 2 is 'the thing'. And actually, that's not what the vast proportion of coaches need to be. They need to tell people which way is north on the map, how to hold the coloured side pointing up not down. And so, I think there's a big imbalance there. (Claire, FG3)

The emphasis, therefore, needs to be on developing a coherent and relevant initial Level 1 coach education course which is catered to the needs of the coaching workforce. At present, this would seem to be individuals who are working in local club environments, with both juniors and adults, within the participation or development domain. To prepare coaches for the realities of this environment, content of courses is paramount. However, there were some differences in participants' perspectives on this within the survey. For example, Nigel believes the knowing 'how' to coach is not significantly important as a Level 1, with technical knowledge and orienteering experience taking precedence.

I think a Level 1 Coach can only really be an assistant. I think probably the reason why it's not being done if it has been dropped is that assistants don't necessarily need to know as much about the 'how' as the sort of the others, they need to know what orienteering is about. Ideally, they would be able to coach as well and by that, I mean understand everything you're [a Level 2 coach] talking about in terms of delivery and inter-personal relationships and stuff like that. But I think just actually having someone who's an experienced orienteer as an assistant coach... I'd rather have an experienced orienteer planning some exercises than a well well-qualified coach. (Nigel FG1)

In contrast, Claire suggested that most individuals who wish to start coaching do possess technical knowledge, therefore, the content should focus on pedagogical aspects and the 'how' to coach, as many will lack that knowledge and experience.

There are people who have a Level 1 certificate. So, the learning how to coach bit which a lot of them haven't got. They've all got the technical ability, but they haven't got that basic how to coach. We're not necessarily going to ask them to deliver our whole series, which is what the Level 2 does, it has to be linked. But you know if one week I can't go, someone can you turn up and deliver this session 'here's the session plan, it's all about aiming off this week'. Yeah, they can do that... within the sport of orienteering, we have a fluid base of people who turn up so it doesn't matter that it's a different coach every week... but to get somebody to turn up and deliver one session. They should be able to

do that with a basic Level one training and to be able to do it with the insurance cover, but we can't at the moment. (Claire, FG3)

Regardless of the proposed content of the ICOC, it was argued that the value and importance of continued learning and development needed to be emphasised to prospective coaches. Within the coach developer focus group, individuals began to reflect upon challenges encountered with previous Level 1 courses, where some coaches lacked the drive and motivation to enhance their craft due to obtaining the bare minimum that was available.

But one of the things we found was that as soon as people got their Level 1 certificate, they thought that was it. They were a coach, and they didn't want to be bothered doing anymore. In terms of time and in terms of money and everything else. So, we had loads of people trained as Level 1 coaches and some of them are still coaching as assistant coaches in clubs. But it didn't give us a basic level of coach qualification, which was appropriate for what our clubs needed. So, I'm worried that if we have a Level 1 being reintroduced, we will fall back into that trap that people will get their Level 1 and then think, 'OK, I'm a qualified coach now and I don't need to do any more formal training and I'm not going to give up two weekends' or whatever else it is. (Coach developer 1, FG4)

Despite these concerns, the perspectives of coaches and coach developers would indicate that there is a greater argument for a clearer, more accessible, reintroduced Level 1 qualification which the ICOC aims to achieve, than against its inclusion. In drawing upon the data collected across both the survey and focus groups, the below represents an initial suggested structure of how the ICOC might be formatted

ICOC example structure:

To offer a more accessible form of coach education for novice orienteering coaches, it is proposed that the ICOC will be delivered completely online and will include both synchronous and asynchronous content. This format would mirror other national governing bodies (e.g., The FA, British Dodgeball, Tchoukball UK, England Netball) who have moved all their Level 1 equivalent qualifications online. In building upon initial topic areas and content included in the previously delivered UKCC Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering, the new ICOC will be comprised of four modules which can be completed asynchronously online, in a self-paced format for coaches. These online modules will contain the content needed to cover the three basic knowledge areas (coaching, orienteering, physical conditioning) and will comprise of 3 guided learning hours. Once a coach has accessed and engaged within the asynchronous module content, they will be able to complete a short multiple-choice assessment to consolidate their knowledge and to check understanding.

Asynchronous online modules:

- eLearning Module 1 – Safety, risk assessments, and ethical coaching practice in orienteering (45 minutes)
- eLearning Module 2 – Planning orienteering coaching activities (45 minutes)
- eLearning Module 3 – Delivering orienteering coaching activities (45 minutes)
- eLearning Module 4 – Coaching pedagogy and communication (45 minutes)
- Short online multiple-choice assessment to consolidate knowledge (15 minutes)

To supplement the asynchronous content, synchronous virtual webinars which are facilitated by a British Orienteering coach developer will be included within the ICOC. In total, three 90minute webinars will be delivered in a weekly manner, which will enable further exploration into key topic areas, while allowing interaction between learners and the coach developer. These sessions will be recorded, but synchronous attendance is encouraged. These webinars will allow learners the chance to ask questions to expand their knowledge and understanding, while providing a space for coach developers to offer advice and expertise to novice coaches.

Synchronous weekly ICOC webinars:

These webinars will be delivered in a 3-week cycle and will be recorded. Within the 3-week cycle, webinars will be delivered at the same time on the same date e.g., Thursday's 7-8:30pm via Microsoft Teams. Coaches should only engage with the synchronous content following completion of the asynchronous module tasks.

1. **Webinar 1** – Recapping on aspects of the asynchronous content, space for learners to ask questions and further consolidate understanding. Focus on reviewing basic knowledge area one – coaching specific knowledge (90 minutes).
2. **Webinar 2** – Coach developer to devise discussion-based tasks between learners. Focus on stimulating reflection on specific scenarios and situations which may arise as a coach. Focus on reviewing basic knowledge area two – orienteering specific knowledge (90 minutes).
3. **Webinar 3** – Coach developer to devise discussion-based tasks between learners. Coach developer to direct learners towards additional resources and support

mechanisms following course completion. Focus on reviewing basic knowledge area three – physical conditioning specific knowledge (90 minutes).

In summary, a coach will have obtained the ICOC qualification once they have engaged with and completed the following course components:

- Successfully accessed the four asynchronous modules.
- Successfully completed the multiple-choice assessment.
- Successfully accessed three virtual webinars either synchronously or asynchronously.

In total, this ICOC will involve 6.5-7 guided learning hours, completed across a 3-week period (this will be the fastest a coach could complete the course. This is comparable to other Level 1 qualifications which are delivered online e.g., FA Introduction to Coaching Football (5 guided learning hours) and the England Netball Level 1 (9 guided learning hours). Akin to these qualifications, there is no summative end assessments delivered in person. A move away from a practical in-person summative assessments was praised by coach developers within one of the focus groups, recognising that such high-stakes end assessments often carry significant pressure and fear of failure, which may put individuals off further engagement with courses. In fact, whether any assessment at all is needed at Level 1 was questioned, with the argument that simply providing coaches with the relevant content and allowing them to reflect and discuss the content in an appropriate environment is suffice.

I think you made an important point there as well, Tom, that the initial one is not assessed because that frightens people away and often you get, you can get them to dip their toes in the coaching system and then start to develop from there and work their way up. And I think it's important that so either the steppingstones between the introduction and the level 2 are very clear for people, so that the level 2 is not too much of a shock for them.... Because otherwise, if the jump's too big, then you'll get a lot of people who don't complete or who don't go through it, and you just don't get your coaches who've been assessed, which might also be another thing from the insurance point of view, do we need them to be assessed? (Coach developer 2, FG4)

ICOC summary:

It is evident that both coaches and coach developers believe the current British Orienteering coach education pathway is not suitable for novice coaches who are about to commence their coaching journeys. The current pathway is lopsided with an overt focus on Level 2 and above coaches, with a plethora of confusing and overlapping options at Level 1, which are unclear

and require further refinement. The suggestions made here are to reintroduce a defined Level 1 qualification, branded as an Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate. This qualification will be condensed, accessible, and provide coaches with the basic knowledge across three core areas (the how to coach, the what to coach, and physical conditioning) to deliver orienteering coaching practices safely and effectively on their own.

While the precise content and topic areas within the ICOC can be refined and decided later, delivering the ICOC 100% online is in line with contemporary coach education courses in the UK offered by alternative national governing bodies. A blend of asynchronous module content allows coaches to access knowledge in a self-paced manner, while the synchronous webinars provide social interactions and discussion which is much desired by participants within this research and across coach learning academic literature. Furthermore, having no summative end assessment, bar a short multiple-choice online quiz to consolidate knowledge, further enhances the accessibility and appeal of the ICOC, instead emphasising reflective practice and experimentation within a coaches' own environment. It is acknowledged time will be required to develop the online asynchronous component of the course, yet this approach overcomes geographical barriers and is likely to see a steady increase in the number of qualified orienteering coaches in the UK who possess the knowledge needed to deliver effectively.

Developing a new Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering

Participants in the previous section claimed that the existing coach education pathway designed and delivered by British Orienteering over emphasises coaching within high-performance and elite contexts. As such, there was an argument that there is currently a lack of clarity and provision available to novice coaches who are at the start of their coaching journeys. In contrast, several participants suggested that the situation is similar at the other end of the coaching pathway, with limited development and education opportunities beyond the much-popularised Level 2 qualification.

There is a lack of development after you have a UKCC level 2 qualification. (Participant 5, Survey)

As far as I know there are no formal coach education qualifications beyond Level 2 certificate which targets club and regional standard - nothing that targets elite senior or junior development beyond 15-year-olds. The only informal coach development at this level that I'm aware of is organised by JROS (Junior Regional Orienteering

Squads) who include coach development as part of their national training camps independently of British Orienteering. (Participant 8, Survey)

There is an issue with the top end provision, as the UKCC Level 3 award has never really taken off and there is a flat line at the highest level of delivery. (Participant 22, Survey)

If Level 2 coaches are working within participation and development domains at club and regional levels, then an individual who possesses a Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering represents the highest qualified coach within the sport. While the current pathway (see Figure 8) indicates that this Level 3 qualification exists and is available, as Participant 22 outlines, the qualification has never really taken off and has had limited success in its delivery. This perspective was echoed within some of the focus groups.

I was involved in the development of the UKCC Level 3 award several years ago. I wrote the physical conditioning modules, and I was involved in one of the very few occasions it was delivered and it kind of fell a little bit by the wayside because it was very clunky. It was quite expensive for people to do. It's very time consuming to build up the portfolio of knowledge to demonstrate the skills at Level 3. And it just didn't work. (Peter, FG3)

Consequently, time, money, and structure are factors which hindered the success and engagement with the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering. When reviewing existing documentation, it is stated that the Level 3 qualification would enhance coaches' technical and practical knowledge. However, more specifically it is argued that this qualification 'opens the door' to paid employment as an orienteering coach (See Figure 11).

Figure 11. Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering: Qualification specification (2016, p. 5)

Overview

What does this qualification cover?

The objective of the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (QCF) is to provide a benefit to learners through an introduction into the principles/practice of safe, ethical and effective management and coaching of orienteering coaching programmes to a variety of participants in an appropriate environment. The *British Orienteering Safety Guidelines* provide further guidance regarding the requirements of appropriate environments for a coach at this level. Therefore, this qualification will prepare learners for employment in coaching orienteering. In addition, the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (QCF) will also enable successful learners to progress to a qualification in the same subject area but at a higher level if they wish to do so.

Who is this qualification designed for?

This qualification is designed for aspiring orienteering coaches to be supported in the development of their knowledge of how to effectively coach participants of all ages. It will also prepare learners for employment in coaching orienteering

In its current format, the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering contains 11 mandatory units, where a total of 26 credits across those units need to be obtained, with a recommendation of 270 guided learning hours (see Figure 12). The 11 mandatory units cover a range of broad and specific topic areas which overlap with the key knowledge bases of coaching, orienteering, and physical conditioning. To pass the Level 3 course, a learner must demonstrate that they meet the specific assessment criteria of all 11 modules, through an excessive assessment format including a learner pack, performance profiling task, practical delivery, session planning task, and reflective action plan.

Figure 12. Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering: Qualification specification (2016, p. 4)

Qualification Structure and Units

To qualify for the 1st4sport Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (QCF), learners must successfully achieve 26 credits from the 11 mandatory units. Achievement of the qualification is normally through attendance on a course of training and completion of the *1st4sport Learner Pack* inclusive of all assessed tasks. The unit specifications for the 1st4sport Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (QCF) are contained within the appendices of this document.

Title	Accreditation No.	GLHs	Level	Credit	
301	Understanding the Principles of Safe and Equitable Coaching Practice	M/601/2108	13	2	2
302	Understanding the fundamentals of coaching programmes	T/601/3535	18	3	3
303	Understanding the principles of planning coaching programmes	A/601/3536	18	3	3
304	Understanding how to support participants' lifestyle through coaching programmes	F/601/3537	18	3	3
305	Analyse participant(s)' performance and set programme goals in orienteering	J/503/4363	5	3	2
306	Plan coaching programmes in orienteering	Y/503/4366	8	3	2
307	Manage safe and effective orienteering coaching programmes	J/503/4086	12	3	2
308	Deliver orienteering coaching programmes	Y/503/4089	15	3	2
309	Develop participant(s)' performance in orienteering	R/503/4091	22	3	3
310	Monitor and evaluate orienteering coaching programmes	D/503/4367	6	3	2
311	Develop coaching practice in orienteering	L/503/4364	5	3	2

Therefore, it is unsurprising that the Level 3 lacked the engagement and can be considered 'clunky'. Despite the 11 mandatory units which are included in the current format, participants within this research identified several content areas which were absent from the Level 3 and warrant inclusion.

There is an interesting lack of guidance to the additional roles that many coaches perform, beyond actually coaching. In the regional junior squad context, the most obvious aspect is taking young people away from their parents on residential settings, whether that be for a training weekend or an international training camp. Who is teaching the coaches how to do that safely and appropriately? In addition, squad coaches might find themselves responsible for managing a budget... Many roles that

are required for the smooth functioning of coaching activities but are outside of 'coaching' as taught in the course. (Participant 12, Survey)

The old Level 3 course needed more development of higher ideas, such as athlete development, as it was very skills orientated and lacked all-round provision on other areas, such as the physical and mental. (Participant 19, Survey)

I feel it is quite comprehensive up to Level 2. The other workshops (remote terrain) could be delivered more frequently. Some physical training/nutrition/psychology workshops could be useful for those hoping to develop further. There seems to be an underlying assumption that the coaching is aimed at children. While this is usually the case, it might be useful to have a bit more focus on coaching adult beginners, or other combinations. (Participant 29, Survey)

A consensus seems to be that the existing Level 3 is overly technique or skills focused, with this content represented within the Level 3 technical syllabus (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering: Qualification specification (2016, p. 22)

Appendix 1: Level 3 Technical Syllabus for Orienteering

This syllabus should be read in conjunction with the Unit Specifications of the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering. To achieve the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering (QCF), learners will be required to demonstrate an understanding and application of coaching the following orienteering techniques in an appropriate environment, as defined by British Orienteering, while following the *British Orienteering Safety Guidelines*. Information on the British Orienteering Step System may be found at www.britishorienteering.org.uk

Practical Topics	Components of Practical Topics
Plan and manage a team of coaches and assistants (qualified and unqualified) to plan, organise and deliver a series of exercises and competition formats addressing the steps A-L of the British Orienteering Step System.	Plan exercises which address specific techniques to coach steps A-L of the step system. Mark up maps and place controls. Manage a team of coaches and assistants.
Course planning.	Demonstrate an ability to plan exercises in order to demonstrate and test specific skills.

While coaching sport-specific techniques and skills is important, it was argued that when working with orienteers within the performance domain, a greater emphasis should be on holistic athlete development and physical conditioning, due to the assumption that at that level, orienteers should already be technically proficient. Consequently, within one of the focus groups there was a discussion that Level 3 coaches require enhanced levels of understanding around running mechanics, sport psychology, physical conditioning, and tactical development. However, the current Level 3 overlooks or merely touches upon these aspects.

Their interest is primarily on the technical side, the technical development, it's not really gearing them towards being better athletes. And I think the big difference is once you start to go to regional squads and beyond into talent squads, then the process is looking at more of a holistic development of the all-around athlete. So, you then start to say OK by the time you get talent level, hopefully your technical skills are certainly of a minimum standard. You should be reasonably technically proficient. I mean, that's arguable whether that is the case, but that's where we should be at. And really, it's then about understanding how to be a better athlete. So, thinking about the physical development of training plans and how to develop their physical conditioning, the mental development, how to cope with pressure, how to live athlete lifestyle and thinking about things like development of imagery skills, relaxation skills, that kind of thing. The mechanics of running, warming up, warming down, the user drills and developing their running skills. The kinetics around that... Then there's more the tactical development of the individual, understanding their strengths and weaknesses and how to start racing, how to start competing at a high level without top end national or even internationals. So, I think that's for me. That's where talent development is coming. Building on the essential elements of what club development is about. (Peter, FG3)

More broadly, it was argued that the current coach education pathway offered by British Orienteering is technique focused. Consequently, a situation has arisen where coaches currently lack the adequate knowledge to provide support to regional and above level athletes on specific aspects e.g., their physical conditioning.

I think one of the key problems that we've got is that because the majority of coaches within orienteering have a technical focus, that's their knowledge base, that's their skill set, the educational process, particularly at Level 1 and 2, its very much geared towards development of technical understanding. And people at my experience working with the talent squad and working with coaches from a variety of backgrounds is that many people feel uncomfortable about providing that level of knowledge and guiding developing athletes, in particular junior developing athletes around their physical conditioning. (Peter, FG3)

However, it was recognised that this is unsurprising, given that most Level 2 coaches will be operating within club environments with the participation and development domain. Orienteers operating within these contexts are more focused on technical development, rather than their physical conditioning given the variability in ages and abilities of orienteers within local clubs. This has contributed to the fact that many Level 2's who wish to progress to Level 3 lack knowledge in this area, given their athletes have not demonstrated a desire to enhance this element of their performance.

They're not interested at that stage in doing the physical. They want to do the technical, so there's no incentive as a Level 2 to focus on the physical stuff. And it's only now when I mean, I'm kind of at that top end of Level 2 thinking, shall I bother doing the jump, the hoops to get to Level 3? I know I've probably got the knowledge now. But that's not

going to help me with my local club sessions because they're not interested in that. And so, it's kind of, you do have to make that as part of the step up to Level 3, I think. (Claire, FG3)

Taking this evidence into account, while well intentioned, the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering proved unsuccessful in its design and delivery. The course's cost and inaccessibility, in combination with a clunky structure which overly focuses on orienteering-specific technical skills, has resulted in the delivery fading in recent years. However, the findings from this research do indicate that a formal coach education course beyond Level 2 is desired by coaches to enhance their knowledge and understanding when working with orienteers within the performance domain. It is suggested, therefore, that the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering should be resurrected, but delivered in a more streamlined and concise manner, given the small target audience of coaches who require this qualification.

Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering coach – role and characteristics:

- This individual will have advanced knowledge of coaching (i.e., roles and responsibilities of a coach, planning and delivering sessions, reflecting on sessions, questioning and feedback, the 'how' to coach).
- This individual will have advanced technical and tactical knowledge of orienteering (i.e., orienteering step system, equipment, placing controls and marking maps, compass use, risk assessment, race tactics and strategies, the 'what' to coach).
- This individual will have advanced knowledge of physical conditioning (i.e., warm up and cool downs, physical demands of orienteering).
- This individual can provide mentoring support to Level 2 coaches who aspire to progress up the coach education pathway and work with high-performance orienteers.
- This individual will have the knowledge and skills to oversee and work within a team of coaches and assistants within both high-performance training and competition environments, in the UK and abroad.
- This individual's predominant target audience will be athletes (adults and juniors) who are operating within the performance domain as part of talent and national squads.

New Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering example structure:

Across a variety of sports, a Level 3 coaching qualification ranges from between 6 to 12 months in duration from start to final assessment period (e.g., The FA, British Dodgeball, British Triathlon). Indeed, many of these qualifications have moved away from summative end-point assessments and have instead embraced portfolio or experiential learning tasks, which accumulate towards an end presentation or ‘graduation’ from the course. Given the busy schedules and limited time commitments of coaches who are operating at Level 3 i.e., those likely to be working full-time within performance domains, adopting a hybrid approach including both online and face-to-face content would seem preferable.

Taking inspiration from existing Level 3 qualifications, it is recommended that the newly developed Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering should be more accessible, less chunky, and avoid overly focusing on sport-specific orienteering technical skills. In considering coaches’ thoughts and feedback within this research project, a wider and more inclusive range of topic areas are proposed. Again, these are merely broad suggestions, and the finite details should be agreed following consultation with the Coaching Advisory Group, while also recognising that relevant content still exists from the previous version of the Level 3 which could easily be resurrected and modified to meet the needs of the modern orienteering coach.

In summary, the new Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering emphasises individual experiential learning, encouraging coaches to reflect on their coaching practice in light of course content i.e., how has the knowledge and information delivered and co-constructed within the course shaped or influenced their coaching, and how is this demonstrated? The course will take 12 months to complete, which is representative of similar level qualifications and will allow adequate time for coaches to engage in the course structure and content within their own personal coaching environments. The course will comprise of in person delivery, online learning, in addition to *in situ* visits, where coach developers will visit and observe coaches operating within their own environment. The course content will be structured around three topic areas: Orienteering coaching; Coaching pedagogy; and Sport-science for orienteering. Example topics within these content areas are outlined below:

Orienteering coaching:

- Sport-specific techniques and tactics

- Session and programme planning
- Race strategies
- Dynamics within coaching teams
- Budgets and international travel
- Safety and ethics in orienteering coaching

Coaching pedagogy:

- Communication and feedback
- Learning theories and understanding athlete learning
- Coaching styles and developing a coaching philosophy
- Coaching behaviours
- Reflective practice and professional development as a coach

Sport-science for orienteering

- Physical conditioning for elite orienteering
- Sport psychology e.g., motivation, dealing with pressure, self-esteem
- Biomechanics and running technique
- Nutrition
- Healthy lifestyles for orienteers

These three content areas will be delivered through a variety of formats to help enhance the overall accessibility and appeal of the new Level 3 (see Table 5). The course emphasises continued and on-going experiential learning where coaches take ownership of the course content and experiment and apply new knowledge within their own context.

Table 5. Newly proposed Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering example structure

Month:	Content and component:	Format:
1	Introductory workshop which outlines the aims, content, and structure of the course, while providing time for questions and initial tasks.	3-hour online webinar.
2	Content area 1: Orienteering coaching – initial workshop to outline the focus of the content area and to explore coaches’ perceptions/experiences of	3-hour online webinar.

	content. Plan and overview of first in person meet in month 3 explained. Continued experiential learning and exploring course content in practice		
3	Content area 1: Orienteering coaching – coaches attend a 2-day in person workshop weekend to discuss specific topics related to this content area in depth. Variety of tasks, practical activities, and discussions. Potentially the option to make this hybrid if coaches cannot attend in person.	2-day in person	
4	Continued experiential learning and exploring course content in practice		
5	Content area 2: Coaching pedagogy – workshop to outline the focus of the content area and to explore coaches’ perceptions/experiences of content. Plan and overview of next in person meet explained. Continued experiential learning and exploring course content in practice	3-hour online webinar.	
6	Content area 2: Coaching pedagogy – coaches attend a 2-day in person workshop weekend to discuss specific topics related to this content area in depth. Variety of tasks, practical activities, and discussions. Potentially the option to make this hybrid if coaches cannot attend in person.	2-day in person	<i>In situ</i> visit to occur between months 6 and 11. A coach developer will visit every coach once delivering a session within their own coaching context and receive feedback, guidance, and advice in relation to their practice.
7	Continued experiential learning and exploring course content in practice		
8	Content area 3: Sport-science for orienteering – workshop to outline the focus of the content area and to explore coaches’ perceptions/experiences of content. Plan and overview of next in person meet explained. Continued experiential learning and exploring course content in practice	3-hour online webinar.	
9	Content area 3: Sport-science for orienteering – coaches attend a 2-day in person workshop weekend to discuss specific topics related to this content area in depth. Variety of tasks, practical activities, and discussions. Potentially the option to make this hybrid if coaches cannot attend in person.	2-day in person	
10	Continued experiential learning and exploring course content in practice		
11	Assessment support – to help coaches in preparation for their final weekend, two workshops will be offered. The first workshop will include a course summary and review, offering final reflections. The second workshop will focus on the assessment which	2 x 2-hour online webinars	

	will occur at the final weekend, offering coaches support and advice.		
12	Course end-presentations and graduation – coaches’ attend their final 2-day in person meet up where each coach will deliver a 20–30-minute presentation which demonstrates their application and interpretation of the course content considering their current coaching context and athlete needs. The weekend will close with a ‘graduation’ ceremony, where coaches will be directed to further resources and learning opportunities.	2-day in person	

As indicated, this is an example and rough structure for the new Level 3 and is open to modification, interpretation, and change. However, in its current format, the Level 3 would include 80 ‘delivered’ content hours, plus an *in situ* visit from a coach developer, as demonstrated below:

- Online webinars = 16 hours
- In person content workshops = 48 hours (6 days, across 3 weekends)
- Course end presentation and graduation = 16 hours (2 days, across 1 weekend)
- 1 x *in situ* visit from a coach developer, between months 6 and 11, occurring within a coach’s own environment.

In moving away from prescriptive, one-size-fits-all assessment formats, learners will be tasked with delivering a 20 to 30minute presentation duration the final weekend of the course. The presentation will aim to demonstrate how a coach has used and applied elements from all 3 of the content areas to their coaching practice. The presentation might include supplementary material such as reflective diary entries, videos, photographs, or testimonies from athletes and other individuals. The assessment is purposely loose to allow coaches to be autonomous and creative in their delivery, but the presentation must address the learning outcomes of the course (which can be developed and decided in time).

New Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering summary:

The newly designed Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering is a specialist qualification geared towards individuals working within the performance domain of orienteering. We are aware that previous delivery of this course has been unsuccessful due to its cost, clunky nature,

overly paperwork driven, and irrelevant content for coaches. However, we know coaches operating within these elite contexts do desire further formal coach education opportunities beyond the well-established Level 2. Therefore, evidence suggests the Level 3 should be reintroduced and made more accessible for coaches, while hopefully having an impact of their perspectives and practices as high-performance orienteer coaches.

While this proposed structure and format of the new Level 3 is broad and requires considerable depth and refinement, it offers coaches the potential to explore a wide variety of relevant content areas, in addition to receiving *in situ* support from a coach developer. The new Level 3 challenges coaches to understand and apply course content within their own environment i.e., what might work for one coach will not necessarily work for another. The course encourages critical reflection on practice and heartens coaches to share these thoughts in a creative and autonomous presentation.

Summary and timeline

The findings from this section have identified that at present, coaches are not currently happy with the formal coach education provision offered by British Orienteering at both Level 1 (participation domain) and Level 3 (performance domain). Thus, it is recommended that a newly formatted online Introduction Certificate to Coaching Orienteering is introduced as an accessible and meaningful formal learning opportunity for novice coaches. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering should be resurrected and reintroduced to high-performance orienteering coaches but in a more streamlined and appealing format, which adopts a hybrid approach of virtual and face-to-face learning.

It is appreciated that these recommendations will require significant investment in terms of both time and money from British Orienteering staff. However, it is worth acknowledging that these courses will not need to ‘start from scratch,’ as existing resources, curricula, learning activities, and ideas can be adapted and modified from previously delivered Level 1 and Level 3 qualifications. These courses were designed by experienced orienteers, therefore, the exact content and format of the newly proposed Introduction Certificate to Coaching Orienteering and Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering should be discussed with these individuals and members of the Coaching Advisory Group.

July 2023 to December 2023 – the initial focus should be on the Introduction Certificate to Coaching Orienteering (ICOC) as this is a ‘new’ qualification and will require more time to design, create, and administer the asynchronous online modules. Therefore, this first period should be spent finalising the exact module content and knowledge to be included within the course, following consultation with relevant individuals. During this period, discussions can also be had around course formatting, programmes, structure, and other logistical elements.

January 2024 to June 2024 – following the initial planning period for the ICOC, the next 6 months should focus on the development and creation of the asynchronous module content. It is expected this period will require the most investment in resources and may require the recruitment of additional staff to work on the project. At this point, this new coach education course should begin to be promoted and advertised to coaches, so they are aware of its structure, focus, and intended outcomes.

July 2024 to December 2024 – the final 6 months working on the ICOC should involve a piloting and testing process to ensure the course runs smoothly, while receiving feedback and suggested alterations and changes from prospective coaches. It is also hoped during this period that coaches will be able to enrol onto the qualification, with a defined schedule of when the courses will be delivered during 2025. The main outcome over these winter months is to ensure that the first ICOC is ready to be delivered in January 2025.

January to June 2025 – while it is hoped that initial planning and discussions regarding the reintroduced Level 3 qualifications can take place between July 2023 and December 2024, it is acknowledged that this might not be possible due to staff workloads and time. Therefore, it is better to begin the process of reintroducing the Level 3 following the initial roll out of the ICOC. The Level 3 is likely to draw upon existing content areas and curricula from the previous course. It is hoped the time needed to finalise the structure and format of the Level 3 will be reduced in comparison to the ICOC. As such, during the first 6 months of 2025 efforts should be made to consult relevant bodies to determine the design of the reintroduced Level 3, considering the delivered content, coordination, and assessment. Conversations can be held with regards to the hybrid approach, while deciding upon the topics and knowledge delivered within the three content areas.

July to December 2025 – the next 6-month period will involve further refinement and planning for the Level 3, but these aspects will primarily focus on logistical components i.e., number of learners, number and employment of coach developers, costs and finance, timescale and schedule, locations for in person delivery, course promotion and expressions of interest, and administration and further course support. The overall aim will be for the first Level 3 course to commence in early 2026, with the course running for 12 months as an initial pilot. Following the evaluation on the finalised format and structure, changes can be made for future delivery and provision.

Recommendation 2: Avoid fast tracking in coach education

Introduction

Coach education pathways represent a linear trajectory through courses, where coaches work their way through a series of levels, requiring them to demonstrate a certain amount of knowledge, understanding, and competency to progress to the next stage. However, in recent years the concept of ‘fast tracking’ has become prominent in sport, referring to “special concessions offered to former elite athletes so that their progress through formal accreditation structures is expedited” (Rynne, 2014, p. 300). Within many sports, elite or high-performance athletes are often allowed to ‘enter’ the coach education pathway at Level 2 or 3, based upon the assumption their competitive athletic experience will translate seamlessly into effective coaching knowledge and practice. This is even though research has demonstrated that fast tracking coaches can be dangerous, as individuals tend to rely on their athletic experiences as the predominant source of coaching knowledge, resulting in the uncritical reproduction of unethical and inappropriate coaching practices.

Participants’ arguments for fast tracking

Within participants’ survey responses, there were suggestions for fast tracking to be implemented i.e., not having to enter the British Orienteering coaching pathway at Level 1. Indeed, participants were frustrated at the current coach education pathway, which was halting the speed of their progression.

Demanding that coaches first learn to teach beginners (Level 1 coach) before being allowed to coach more experienced orienteers (Level 2 coach) makes no sense. In my case I knew how to orienteer but didn't know "how to coach". Forcing me to do significant work on coaching at the easiest levels of technical orienteering was of little interest, took a very significant amount of time and was a barrier to becoming a qualified coach. Another issue is the lack of recognition of prior learning. E.g., on my Level 2 coaching course we spent significant time on orienteering technique (which I knew all about but other didn't) and significant time on "how to teach/coach" (which I knew little about but others on the course were qualified teachers and coaches in other sports and knew all about). (Participant 16, Survey)

Direct entry to different levels of coaching without having to work up through beginners to elite athletes. (Participant 19, Survey)

Throughout the focus group discussions, many coaches echoed the sentiments of Participant 16 above with regards to the importance of being an experienced orienteer. The findings of this research strongly highlight that within the sport of orienteering practitioner experience i.e., experience as an orienteer, is privileged and valued far more considerably than any other formal or informal learning. Indeed, many coaches' put forward a compelling argument that orienteering is significantly different to other sports, therefore, without considerable experience as an orienteer an individual would not be able to coach or plan exercises to any meaningful level.

So, let's say you were a lead coach in a squad or a club. And you're required to plan orienteering exercises, which if you're not an experienced orienteer and don't have some planning experience or an understanding of orienteering... it isn't something you just read in a book. So, if I compare it with football, for example where I've done some football coaching without any qualifications with under 10s, I was getting exercises out of a book which were very easy to understand and deliver on a football pitch. Umm, in orienteering the idea is that you're going to unknown areas with different maps each time. You have these exercises, which are ideas that you can get out of a book but then you actually have to plan a course which interprets that exercise in a forest or in a park or on some moorland... in order to do that, you need to need to be an orienteer. You need to understand orienteering. So, I think you can deliver football things from learning, you know, exercises learnt from courses and books and what have you. But I'm not sure you can in orienteering. I don't think it transfers. So, there needs to be orienteering experience...without an understanding of orienteering, without some experience yourself... it would be very difficult, I think. (Nigel, FG1)

I would actually question your ability to coach effectively even at Level 1 if you have no understanding of the sport. I totally agree that you don't need to be expert at it, but I think to be able to cope at something you need to know what good looks like. (Heather, FG1)

TL: *Can I know what good looks like without being good myself?*

You don't have to be good at it, but you have to know, apart from anything else, you have to know what it feels like to be lost in the forest. You have to know what it feels like to go cleanly to a control and to the two things in between being lost and going cleanly. You would gain them as you gain experience in the sport, but I tend to agree with Nigel that I don't think you can get very far with your coaching if you don't know anything about the sport when I have parents who want to help, I quite often, assuming they know nothing about the sport, I will give them a little list of half a dozen questions that they can ask their child as they're following the child around. Umm, so you can actually use a totally uninformed parent that way, but you've got to have a competent coach to set up the exercise in the 1st place. As Nigel said, to put the controls out. I always liken it to building the football stadium before you can actually go and do your coaching. We have to go and build the orienteering exercise. Before we can start coaching. Umm so you need some competence at that, and you need to understand what

the participants are expected to achieve. At whatever level it is technically. (Heather, FG1)

The argument put forth here is that a coach needs experience of orienteering at a specific level to know what ‘good’ looks like when coaching. Both Nigel and Heather suggested that in simple terms, unless you have been lost in a forest as an orienteer, you would be unable to provide support, advice, and guidance as a coach to an athlete faced in a similar position. Further discussions within the focus group revealed that both in the past and present, several coaches are working with elite level orienteers without possessing any formal coach education qualifications, with practitioner experience clearly being valorised.

TL: The actual formal learning element seems to be devalued in comparison to practitioner experience. Or am I being unfair?

I think that's less of an issue now than it has been in previous years. If you go back long enough, there were people training with GB squad without any coaching qualifications at all. (Heather, FG1)

Yeah, I mean like most of the coaches don't have qualifications, I would say. Because there isn't a qualification for them. There is no Level 3, and Level 2 is kind of mostly relevant to what they're trying to do...Some of it is relevant, but it's a very large hurdle for them to get over in order to be an assistant coach in an elite environment, I think... I'm just trying to think of the people that I know that they're mostly to sort of ex athletes or current athletes who are joining in as assistant coaches at GB level...the more I think about it, the more at every level there are challenges of not understanding aspects of the ‘what’ if you like, your athletes are trying to do... Umm so I would agree with Heather that just being a lead coach at a club level, you need to be an experienced orienteer to be able to plan the exercises... You can do things on school, playing fields and things like that, which should generally be done by teachers without any experience that at that level that's fine. But as soon as you go into a forest, then there's an extra level of understanding. But also, I think understanding again, what the individuals are finding easy. One of the biggest challenges with orienteering is that you can't just look at someone and see how they're performing. You have to talk to them. It's in their head. They're performing in their head mostly... So if you haven't been to Bulgaria, where some of the GB are going in a few months' time, it'd be quite difficult for you to help them understand what it's going to be like out there, which is kind of part of the job of... you can research it, but having that experience is part of what you're delivering, part what you're offering [as a coach]. (Nigel, FG1)

Nigel and Heather strongly articulated how orienteering coaching, specifically at a high-performance level, requires significant elite experience as an orienteer. These discussions continued, with participants further reiterating the need to understand what ‘good’ looks like in orienteering, while being able to effectively plan exercises. It was suggested that if any

individual was lacking in technical competency, formal coach education would not be able to support.

I think this this one bit that you're missing out there and that is the fact that I think Nigel mentioned before, to coach orienteering, we have to devise an exercise which involves controls, or something being placed accurately in the forest. If we don't have the technical capabilities to read the map and place those controls adequately. Then we can't create a viable exercise for them. So, we have to have that technical competence to go and put the controls out to plan. The exercise in the first place to understand the area and to plan the exercise and to put them out (Heather, FG1)

TL: *Can formal coach education or other provision support me if I'm lacking in that?*

It would limit your ability to be effective as a coach If you didn't have a good understanding. What I tend to see is that relatively inexperienced coaches take about five times as long to plan and put out an exercise as I do. (Heather, FG1)

I think Heather's point was very good about...you were saying you can't actually see someone doing it and see whether they're doing it right or wrong? (Nigel, FG1)

Yeah, just knowing what good looks like. (Heather, FG1)

What good looks like is very, very hard in orienteering because you can't see them, as you pointed out, they're in the forest. You can't see them. It's just different, but I think it does require an understanding of the sport which I think you get in football and basketball by having watched it a lot. You know, even though I haven't played basketball, I've seen it a lot and I've watched my kids and I can see what good is. I can see these kinds of generic things that you can tell. I can tell if someone who's running well through the forest, I could help them. You know you can see when they're nervous and all that sort of physical sides relatively easy, but the mental side is much harder and it's primarily a mental sport. We just don't have that in orienteering. (Nigel, FG1)

Within a different focus group, the same arguments were put across. However, this time it was suggested that if you did not have experience as an orienteer at a specific performance level, you would struggle to obtain the authority and respect from your athletes.

And if I kind of compare it with go, go back to my husband, he's an outdoor instructor. He's got various different bits of paper, you know, for climbing paddle boarding, mountain leader, etcetera. And with orienteering. Yes, he's got the navigation skill... he can do micro navigation. But he's only been to a few orienteering events, and he kind of approaches it in quite a different way. So, I think he could do Level 1, but I think he'd struggled to kind of move past that because he's not got the kind of background experience of...I don't know. The art of it may be, and I certainly don't think you could progress past Level 2 at all without being an active participant in the sport simply because the people your coaching wouldn't see you as having any kind of authority, I suppose... it's very much a kind of people led thing. So, you know how somebody

performs, you wouldn't really want to be coached by somebody who had quite poor performance personally in orienteering, even if they understood it all. Even if they understood what theory and like, you know, maybe. And you know, physically they could, like, do the courses, but kind of, I don't know it wouldn't kind of make sense to me. (Jasmine, FG2)

I think she's right. Yeah, I think they have to have some sort of experience, even just to discuss route selection and stuff like that if you haven't gone out and done it and run through the brambles. Rather than taking the path. How are you going to discuss which way is faster or better, because you haven't actually experienced any of that? If you don't have an experience of it, how would you teach it to people? (Val, FG2)

Obtaining respect from your participants was also discussed within the third focus group, with this time an appreciation that obtaining respect varies depending upon the audience a coach is working with.

So, its two different things being a coach and contributing to coaching. We have to be careful not to muddy those and I think that there's a bit little bit of a danger a short while back of those two things being confused. What you need to be a coach is very different from what you need to be able to contribute to coaching and I think it's probably more sensible for us to think about what you need to be a coach and one of the things is you have to have some respect from the people that you're talking to and that becomes quite difficult at different levels, isn't it? If You've got complete beginners that are adults, then it's quite easy for anybody with a decent level of competence to present things and have some respect. There are two ways to get in into that, really. And both sets of people need different, different qualifications. How easy it is to put that into practice in a system, I'm not sure. (Sidney, FG3)

The notion of 'experiencing' orienteering was heavily emphasised, to understand terrains, provide guidance on reducing mistakes, and understanding athlete's thought processes. Within the same focus group, it was outlined how these aspects could not be learned vicariously, echoing the examples from the previous focus group which compared orienteering to other sports.

TL: So, you can't learn that vicariously through others or reading about it or talking to other people at all?

I think you have to speak from experience in a lot of these things. Yeah, just so I could say I could be teaching something and go right 'When I was out in Cyprus doing this, the terrain was a lot different, so we were training differently, and we were using different types of route selection and different processes in our mind'. Then we could be in the Yorkshire Dales, and I can then show that there are different processes to think of when you're running because I've experienced it, but if you haven't experienced it, you can't. A lot of adult learning is using your own experiences to then teach other people. (Val, FG2)

I think as well with orienteering as opposed to other sports, there are a huge number of variables which don't exist in other sports. So, let's say football, it's a team sport, it's not individual. So, you've kind of, you've got fixed positions. It's all those kinds of like there's fixed, you know, you can watch matches, you can analyse matches, having seen them, you can't do that with orienteering. There's no kind of videoing of it really. I mean there's kind of like looking at people's route choices. you've got to kind of be inside somebody's head to, and people will perform well in orienteering for different reasons. So, I know, for example, that I'm fairly strong at running, but I will always make a big mistake and that will blow all of my time. (Jasmine, FG2)

Yeah, if you've experienced making those big mistakes and then you're coaching how to make those mistakes smaller, you're speaking from experience as well as giving them guidance on how to do it. Whereas on a football field. Yeah, you're going to play, what, 442? Whatever. It's going to be 'we're going to do it this way, and if this happens, we can practice for this. If this happens, we can practice for that.' Whereas, yeah, with us, it's so individual. And everyone thinks different, and we all have different routes, and we all have different techniques that we all implement. (Val, FG2)

In the third focus group, coaches explained their preference towards a fast-tracking system, by providing an example of an elite orienteer and his pathway into becoming a national level coach. It was proposed that there should be a certain criterion in place that would allow coaches to 'skip' components of the formal coach education pathway.

*What happens when somebody's coming in as a as a as an elite X elite orienteer? And I think of someone like ****. Our work within the talent squad and he had to go all the way back and start with the assistant coach, level one and jump through those hoops to start the process. And to me, that was pretty crazy.... **** ran at several World Cups and World Championships and he started working with him with the talent squad back in ****. And at that point he wasn't a qualified coach, but you would never have said, 'oh, I'm not going to entertain employing him with the talent squad' because he brought immediately to that group a wealth of knowledge, particularly around technical and tactical training and understanding how to orienteer in a systematic fashion. And how to compete on the international stage which you know, a lot of a lot of coaches within British orienteering have not been at that level as an athlete and they don't understand necessarily the pressures and the special skills that are required to compete successfully on the international stage, at world championships. So, you immediately go why are we making him jump through all these hoop's step by step to get into what ultimately is a level he's already equipped. So, I'm very much in the favour of whether you call it fast tracking. (Peter, FG3)*

It ought to be sufficient to be able to say, ok, you know that guy has got 10 years orienteering experience, at that sufficient national or international level. He doesn't need to do the, you know, the basics of things. We just need to, ok, how do I run a session? How do I deal with the safety side of things, and you know he can skip some of these other bits. (Bob, FG3)

In short, as evidenced throughout the focus group and survey data, a substantial proportion of participants within this research project spoke in favour of a fast-tracking process, which would allow them to bypass the current coach education pathway and obtain accreditation at a faster rate. Within orienteering a culture which privileges practitioner experience and assumes expertise as an orienteer will translate to meaningful and appropriate coaching practice exists.

Participants' arguments against fast tracking

While most of the coaches within the focus groups were in favour of a fast-tracking system, they began to question the feasibility and logistics of the process. It was suggested that developing a fast-tracking system would be a challenge, especially with regards to deciding who can and who cannot be fast tracked, creating a grey area which would likely result in frustration within the coaching community, as a one-size-fits-all approach would be difficult.

So how would you, how would you go about deciding on who gets fast tracked and who doesn't? Who decides that process? Because it's, you know, the example Peter used. I'm sure that would be you know a no brainer, but then there will be people further down the list. You go 'well, you know are they, or aren't they? They're not Team GB or they haven't been in the past, or they were it was ten years ago'. It sounds like you're creating a massive you know a bit of a cottage industry if you're not careful on trying to decide who does what and who doesn't? (Bob, FG3)

But you still have assessors... as a coach, do they meet these criteria? So, if you can present, not necessarily the whole portfolio that you have to go through now to get to Level 2. But if you can present a summary of here's what I've done, there should be a way you can cross reference that and say ok, yeah. Well, they've demonstrated this skill in this environment and that happens across all sorts of prior learning accreditations, I don't think it has to be a barrier. I think as an assessor, you can see what skills you're looking for, and they can't, you know, it's not just a tick box, it is an interpretation of it. So, I don't. I don't think that has to be difficult. I think getting people to present their prior learning or their accreditation of their skills might be more of an issue because I know there are people who I see going through their Level 2 and they think they know it and actually their organisational skills aren't there. They can't organise a session. (Claire, FG3)

While previously advocating for a fast-tracking approach, coaches offered an alternative perspective on the issue by questioning the process and providing anecdotal examples of elite coaches who perhaps lack coaching ability.

Whatever the Level 1 allows you to do, you have to be careful that a person who's fast tracked beyond it is able to do all of it, don't you? Otherwise, they've got that

qualification. No matter how elite an athlete they are, they might not actually be competent to deliver a level one session to a group of random people who just have turned up one night who they don't know. And have insurance. I know quite a lot, in fact, personally I know people who are and have been elite athletes who I wouldn't trust with a random collection of 10 people who turn up to a forest session to do that safely. So, I think you just have to be careful with the fast tracking. (Sidney, FG3)

Indeed, it was proposed that coaches should still enter the coach education pathway at Level 1, with an acknowledgement that coaching orienteering and participation in the sport are separate entities. Moreover, considering individual's wider life experiences and additional roles might prove to be a more suitable process when reflecting progression through the coach education pathway.

Yeah, I mean I actually agree that you should start at Level 1 anyway, because I absolutely agree that the pedagogy side is, you know, you have to learn how to do that. There are certain things that you learn to do. So, I think it's fine for people to have to start at Level 1, but that Level 1 should be made fairly quick and easy to do. Because I think otherwise, people will just be put off going any further with it. If the Level 1 was as difficult logistically as the Level 2 has been for me, I just wouldn't progress to Level 2 even if I was technically able. So, I've got no problem with that as being a kind of good orienteer does not necessarily make you into somebody who can explain coaching or coach well. And so, I think there has to be a kind of baseline. (Jasmine, FG2)

I think there could be a caveat. So, say if you've got a coaching experience in a different sport or if you are an instructor somewhere, a lot of military people naturally go into coaching because that's how we're taught. Or something like that. So, if you've got that sort of background anyway and the experience, then you can prove you got the experience by logging races, you can just go back to see your results and the races and stuff. Then maybe they could do, they could jump straight to Level 2. (Val, FG2)

Interestingly, while coaches provided arguments for and against fast tracking, in general coach developers were against the process. The position was put forth that elite orienteers might not have a significant amount of experience being coached, therefore, it should not be assumed they will be able to facilitate athlete learning and engage appropriately in relevant coaching tasks.

I think you give them a fast-track system which involves documenting their experience to a point where they look at it and think 'oh it would be easier to go on the course'. (Coach developer 3, FG4)

There are things about the way to put things over that an elite sportsperson wouldn't necessarily know about unless they had some of a training. You know this for example, as a teacher or so on. So, I do think there's something to be said for fast tracking, but you do need to learn how to put things over and how to plan and so on and how to do

for example, you know a lot of elite coaching is not the same as teaching beginners in your clubs. So, for example, you know the Level 2 is very much about being able to plan, deliver and evaluate a series of linked coaching sessions because people need linked coaching sessions to progress. You can't just suddenly, you know, assume that they know how to use a compass. Assume how to judge distance. Assume how they know how to read contours and so on. So, you do need to plan your coaching so that you can move people forward in little steps. Now an elite orienteer coming in as a coach if they're only going to coach the elite people, the trouble is that some of these elite people may be very good, but many have not actually had much coaching in their clubs... I think the elite orienteer needs to be able to prove that they can actually coach in a progressive sort of way and not just run around the forest putting some flags out and have your people run round, you know, coaching is about changing behaviour, changing the way people do things to make them better. (Coach developer 1, FG4)

While against the notion of fast tracking, coach developers were sympathetic to orienteering coaches' situation by recognising the current accessibility issues with the British Orienteering coach education pathway. It was proposed that the current barriers in place might encourage coaches to try and engage with a fast tracking process.

So, although I expressed my view in a light-hearted way, it does actually cover what you're saying... I think part of it is the current system... I spoke to a young man at the weekend who was saying he looked for a Level 2 coaching course and he'd love to go to Scotland for three days, but he just can't because of his family circumstances. Those people looking at the current system will be saying we must be fast tracked we must be fast tracked. And I wonder if there was a much more flexible system, the imperative to be fast tracked would lessen a bit. (Coach developer 3, FG4)

One coach developer provided two stories of elite orienteers who challenged the notion of fast tracking and spoke positively about learning and engaging with formal coach education. Such stories should be shared and promoted to help shift the mindset of other orienteers who believe the aim is to progress through the pathway as quickly as possible.

I had two elites on courses and one of them was a Level 2 who came through the Level 2 and also through the Level 3 and his wife was about to start on the coaching journey and I said, 'Well should she come straight into Level 2?' and he said definitely no. Everybody should start at the basics so they get the basics of coaching going and I've often used that person and what he said to, you know, convince other people that they should start at the beginning and not try and kind of jump in at the deep end without their water wings on and another person who we actually had to force into doing the coaching foundation course, who was an elite orienteer finished the coaching foundation and said I actually learned quite a lot on that because I think what we forget is that elites are not necessarily coached... I would almost say that we deal with it in a case-by-case basis and almost ask them to submit a video to us of their coaching session to see what it's like as well and we can then advise them as to, you know what, maybe what they're missing and what they would learn my coming on a lower course and they think they should do. (Coach developer 2, FG4)

Despite mixed perspectives on fast tracking from both coaches and coach developers, previous British Orienteering documentation has seemingly ‘encouraged’ the practice, potentially contributing towards an expectation and accepted culture that individuals with ‘elite’ or ‘high-performance’ orienteer experience can skip Level 1 or introduction to coaching designed courses and progress directly to Level 2 (See Figure 14).

Figure 14. Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering Overview (2016, p. 1)

What are the course pre-requisites?

If you are an experienced orienteer and wish to coach independently you are advised to ring the National Office and seek advice on going directly to the Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering, which will be more use for a coach in an orienteering club.

To attend the course candidates must:

- be at least 16 years of age
- demonstrate the ability to navigate in an area, this may be via a practical skills assessment or through evidence of competing at an orienteering event

Furthermore, previous documentation has indicated that being a competent orienteer to a specific level is needed to enrol on formal coach education courses at both Level 1 and Level 2. This stance assumes that experience and competence as an orienteer naturally translates into an innate ability to coach effectively at a designated level (See Figures 15 and 16).

Figure 15. UKCC Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering Information Pack (2016, p. 11)

How will you be Assessed?

There will be several opportunities to be assessed within the Level 1 course which will form the basis of your Level 1 qualification. They include:

- A series of assessed written tasks outlined in your 1st4sport candidate pack which will be handed out on day 1 of the course.
- A home study task to be done before day 3 of the course.
- 1x 20 minute practical coaching session on day 3 of the course. This will allow you to demonstrate coaching skills within the confines of the group of people on your course.

The course is very practical with a lot of opportunity to practice the 'how to coach' skills with tutor support and feedback. The exam paper is to test your knowledge of the coaching practice covered on the course. You will be given a topic for your practical assessment before day 3 to enable you to plan and prepare.


The results of your assessment will be conveyed to you in a one-to-one discussion with your Tutor or Assessor at the end of day 3.

Reminder:

- You need a current Emergency Aid Certificate (minimum of 4 hrs)
 - You must be able to demonstrate a personal ability to perform the skills and techniques up to and including Level 4 (Light Green) of the Step System. Competition results are one way to do this.
- (A copy of the British Orienteering Step System can be found on the web at http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/downloads/documents/cdoc_LogbookStepSystem.pdf)

Figure 16. Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering Overview (2016, p. 1)

Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering



Pre-requisites:

- be at least 17 years of age to start the training and 18 years of age prior to certification
- hold the Level 1 Award in Coaching Orienteering or have experience of helping with orienteering coaching in your club / region
- be able to perform the skills and techniques of TD 5 (Level 5) of the British Orienteering Step System

Problematically, this documentation has set a precedence with regards to fast tracking, positioning it as an accepted practice and something which should be promoted and encouraged amongst the orienteering community. Indeed, within some of the focus groups participants indicated that they are fully aware that it was possible to 'skip' qualifications depending upon an individual's practitioner experience.

I think in I'd understood that a lot of Level 2 qualification at the moment where you would if you're an experienced orienteer, then you were allowed to skip level one and

go straight to level 2. Whether that sensible or not, I don't know. Maybe you would touch on some of the Level 1 concepts, whether you're trying to get rid of that, I don't know, but that's certainly something that's been done in the past, as I understand it, although I'm not, I don't deliver coaching myself. (Nigel, FG1)

We did that in Scotland, although we have kept the Level 1 qualification in Scotland, which I think England has abandoned a couple of years ago. We do allow people to go straight to Level 2 if they have an appropriate experience at orienteering and proven results and so on, but also, they have to do the assessed bits of the Level 1 qualification so they have to complete the written tasks and be observed, I think... so it's not a sort of free passing to it. They have to prove that they've got the competence to go straight into Level 2. (Heather, FG1)

The idea of needing to be competent orienteer to a certain 'TD' level to coach individuals who were competing at a similar level was also outlined, with the argument once again that practitioner experience trumps any theoretical or practical knowledge obtained from other sources.

TL: What we are saying is... unless you've experienced TD5 yourself, you couldn't work with people or couldn't coach those who are doing that themselves, if that makes sense?

You'd struggle. (Val, FG2)

Yeah, you'd struggle. I think it would just be very theoretical and a lot of orienteering is kind of a mixture of theoretical and kind of knowledge as well, even for things like different mappers have different mapping styles. So, I will always tell a junior if we go into a Lake District area that has got a map done by a certain mapper, I'll say be careful because not all the rock that you see in the terrain will be mapped because this mapper kind of tends to map it only like bigger features. It'll only map crags that are like a meter high. Whereas other mappers might put loads and loads of stuff on the map and another mapper won't, so even the mapping itself is a little bit kind of subjective... there's lots of kind of nuances. I think that unless you've done it yourself, you just won't be able to pass it on. (Jasmine, FG2)

You wouldn't be able to coach it to other people. It all comes from experience that. (Val, FG2)

Summary

The findings from this research project have identified that a substantial number of coaches believe that a fast tracking system should be included and embedded within any future coach education pathway delivered by British Orienteering. Within the sport, there is a strong valorisation of practitioner expertise and experience as an orienteer, which supersedes any other sources of knowledge and learning. Arguments were put forth that an individual simply

could not be an effective orienteer coach if they did not possess the technical competency as a practicing orienteer. However, British Orienteering have contributed to this evolving culture by actively encouraging fast tracking within the current pathway.

The recommendation made here as part of this report is to avoid doing this in the future and actively discourage fast tracking in any shape. Academic research has consistently demonstrated over the past few years that ‘playing is not coaching,’ and fast tracking can result in the uncritical reproduction of ineffective and inappropriate coaching practices across a variety of sports. While recognising that the current coach education pathway has logistical issues which may have contributed towards coaches wanting to skip levels and progress as quickly as possible, it is hoped that the proposed changes made by introducing the ICOC and newly developed Level 3 might help to discourage this. Interestingly, coach developers are against the prospect of embedded fast tracking within any future provision and were able to provide anecdotal stories of elite orienteers who share the same opinion. Thus, moving forwards British Orienteering should seek to gather a collective of elite, well respected orienteers, who can share their positive experiences and engagement with formal coach education programmes. As their thoughts and beliefs are likely to carry ‘weight’ due to their standing within the sport, it is hoped these individuals may help to promote the benefits of lifelong continuous learning as a coach, helping to position formal coach education as a learning experience rather than a box which needs to be ticked.

In referring to Figure 9 which highlights the newly proposed coach education pathway, the argument remains the same – learners enter the pathway at Level 1, and this is regardless of their orienteer experience as a competitor. Furthermore, individuals can progress through the coaching pathway through demonstrating their ability of coaching. There will not be any pre-requisites to enrol on a qualification which are tied to a participant’s ability to compete as an orienteer. Enrolment and course achievement is obtained through demonstrating the required coaching competencies.

Recommendation 3: Coaching membership and ongoing coach development

Introduction

The findings from both the survey and focus groups indicate that coaches across all levels of the pathway would value the opportunity for on-going, self-directed, coach development opportunities. There was a concern by some coaches that there were cases of coaches ‘sitting on qualifications’ i.e., completing a course and then failing to engage in further coach education or coach development. Moreover, it was considered problematic that individuals would have prolonged breaks away from coaching i.e., 2 years plus, before stepping back into a coaching role without updating themselves or current practices. As such, it was argued that the creation of ongoing CPD or attending ‘refresher’ courses would be of value to ensure individuals kept up to date with contemporary coaching ideas.

My biggest concern is the difference between those who hold a coaching qualification and those who are actively coaching. It seems that BO does not have a way to identify which 'coaches' are coaching and which are sitting on an unused qualification. This has many issues - it is a waste of resources to qualify people who are not willing to use their qualification for the benefit of the sport. If they do then come out of the woodwork to do some coaching, they are potentially going to be out of date with current practice. (Participant 14, Survey)

It depends how many coaches you want to lose over the 10 or 15 years because they may disappear and come back. You know, I mean I've not coached for, I don't know. I've coached almost all the time since I started, but I have had certainly a 2-year gap once when I didn't do any, and in fact, I was out of the country most of that time. And so, I don't know. I think that's very difficult really... if they're not actively coaching and they're not doing any continuing education for a significant time, then it might be sensible that they at least go back and talk to an assessor before they start coaching again. (Sidney, FG3)

Yeah, a license as it were to coach, one needs to do one every two years to refresh on the first date... every five years there's a refresh on the core elements of, you know level 2 or level one or whatever it is... invariably things move on and if people haven't, you know, maybe they're taking a break. You know, they've got kids and been dealing with those for a while and now the kids have flown the nest. They want to go back to coaching, that ability to just refresh it... people that have done level 1, level 2 in the past and that's just lapsed, I wouldn't trust them to take people out in the woods on their own at the moment, but they could very quickly get back to where they needed to. (Bob, FG3)

It was also suggested that a revalidation approach was previously adopted by British Orienteering with mixed success, where coaches needed to demonstrate they were actively

coaching within a 3-year period to maintain their coaching licence and demonstrate they were practicing.

I should probably point out that the old CPD requirement to retain a coaching certificate was at least 30 hours practical coaching across a 3-year span. For the 5 years between 2014 & 2018 when I was keeping a CPD log my annual hours were 294, 248, 263, 210 & 285. So, I have been frustrated by there not being a Level 3 course on offer. (Participant 21, Survey)

We did have a system of people recording, you know, CPD that they did in the past and it got checked by the regional coaching officers and this, you know, you've got a tick in a box that you had done the right number of credits and so on. But there was no way of saying to a coach who didn't maintain the credits 'you can't coach anymore; you won't be licensed'. You know, 'you'll still have your qualification, but you won't have a license and therefore you won't be insured'... there was the carrot and there was a stick, but nothing happened, people didn't maintain those. (Coach developer 1, FG4)

Therefore, reintroducing a CPD log or an alternative method to record a coaches' development activities was considered a crucial step for British Orienteering to develop:

Need to go back to some sort of CPD system. (Participant 12, Survey)

I'd reintroduce some sort of requirement to keep active in order to keep the qualification/coaching licence active. There used to be a requirement to submit a coaches' CPD log every few years and I think it was reviewed by regional coaching coordinators, but it was abolished due to the workload involved. I agree it was a lot of admin, and was not workable in that format, but by removing it, there's now no distinction between active and inactive coaches, and the impression I got is that regional or national coaching coordinators have no idea who is actually coaching. So, I'd work on a design of monitoring method that did not add loads of admin but was usable as a tracking. For example - when a coaching activity is registered or the BO return is completed for it, there could be boxes for lead coach and assistant coaches, tied into those people's BO membership numbers, so it was logged how many sessions each year a given coach led or assisted with. Similarly, attendance/participation in coaching conference sessions or webinars could be logged on a coach's record. (Participant 14, Survey)

Consequently, it is recommended that coaches need to revalidate their British Orienteering Coaching Membership (more on this below) every 3 years. In practice, this means that coaches will have 3 years following the completion of their last formal coach education certificate to either:

1. Complete the next formal coach education qualification on the pathway
2. Accumulate a certain number of British Orienteering 'Coaching Credits' based on their current coaching 'level,' which can be obtained via four coach development options.

If a coach enrolls onto the next formal coach education certificate on the pathway e.g., if a Level 1 coach enrolls onto a Level 2, then their British Orienteering Coaching Membership has been revalidated for the next 3-years. However, there is also a recognition that not every coach has ambitions of completing the next formal coach education certificate, meaning it should not be assumed that all coaches wish to engage in a linear progression through the coach education pathway. As some participants suggested:

Not very accessible to me [the current coach education pathway] ... there seems to be an expectation that I should go and do a level 2 course despite not actually wanting to coach anything other than young children. More online CPD would be good. (Participant 3, Survey)

I think in the previous diagram [the current coach education pathway], there's a sort of expectation that all coaches want to achieve Level 3. And I think that's not true. I think there potentially could be quite a large proportion that would be happy with Level 1 if it meant that they could deliver sessions and were covered by insurance. (Bob, FG3)

Consequently, due to the limited number of qualified orienteering coaches in the UK in comparison to other sports, it was argued that rather than trying to encourage linear progression through the coach education pathway to the highest level, there is a need to provide ongoing and regular 'horizontal' coach development opportunities which are accessible and avoid 'hurdles':

There is a real shortage of coaches, I suspect at every level. There's a shortage of coaches, so whatever system is put in place, it needs to be accessible and not put people off. So, we're not trying to get people up to sort of a level 5 or whatever at some stage. If 10 or 12 people in the country have a Level 3. That would be a huge, you know, banner to wave. So, I don't know the numbers etcetera. But the numbers of actual qualified versus the number of active coaches, it's probably relatively low. So, whatever you put in place needs to not be a huge hurdle. (Nigel, FG1)

Therefore, the proposed new coach education pathway (please revisit Figure 9) enables coaches to revalidate their British Orienteering Coaching Membership every 3-years through accessing a 'menu' of four coach development options, which allows coaches to accumulate a level-dependent number of 'Coaching Credits' in a bespoke, flexible, and individual manner. The following level-dependent credit structure for membership revalidation is suggested:

- **Level 1 coaches** i.e., those who hold an Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate = **6** ‘Coaching Credits’ are needed every 3-years to revalidate their coaching membership OR enrolment onto the Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering.
- **Level 2 coaches** i.e., those who hold a Level 2 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering = **10** ‘Coaching Credits’ are needed every 3-years to revalidate their coaching membership OR enrolment onto the Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering.
- **Level 3 coaches** i.e., those who hold a Level 3 Certificate in Coaching Orienteering = **10** ‘Coaching Credits’ are needed every 3-years to revalidate their coaching membership.

To accumulate either 6 or 10 ‘Coaching Credits’ over a 3-year period, four coach development options are available. This approach allows coaches to choose both the format and content of their development, ensuring their learning is meaningful and specific to their needs as a coach, while hopefully being accessible and meets their preferences. Furthermore, it is hoped the coach development options and ‘Coaching Credits’ format will help coaches to prepare for the next formal coach education certificate on the pathway.

Coaches have the option to accumulate their ‘Coaching Credits’ as they wish throughout the 3-year period to revalidate e.g., some may decide to accumulate credits progressively over the 3 years, while some may decide to obtain all credits as quickly as possible. Nonetheless, on-going coach development should be emphasised and encouraged to all coaches, while promoting the value and importance of lifelong learning.

British Orienteering Coaching Membership

A key recommendation is the need for coaches to ‘revalidate’ every 3-years, through enrolling onto the next formal coach education certificate on the pathway or obtaining the relevant number of ‘Coaching Credits’. To help with the monitoring and evaluation of this process, it is proposed that upon completion of the Level 1 positioned Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate, individuals automatically accrue a British Orienteering Coaching Membership. The exact details of what this involves can be discussed and explained to learners at the end of every Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate, within the final webinar.

As a member, coaches will need to pay a set fee every 3-years, which will enable them to obtain and record their ‘Coaching Credits’. It is recommended that this fee be nominal e.g., £20 every 3-years and is ‘renewed’ through the revalidation process. This fee will help contribute towards the on-going creation and delivery of the four coach development options. It should be clear that the fee allows coaches to access the four coach development options, in addition to enrolling onto the next coach education course (which would be the Level 2). Coaches who complete a ‘Level 0’ course will not be automatically enrolled into the British Orienteering Coaching Membership scheme.

In summary, the British Orienteering Coaching Membership involves the following:

- Individuals automatically accrue a British Orienteering Coaching Membership once they have completed the Introduction to Coaching Orienteering Certificate (Level 1).
- Having British Orienteering Coaching Membership enables a coach access to the four coach development options, in addition to allowing them to enrol onto the next course on the formal coach education pathway.
- As a British Orienteering Coaching Member, coaches must revalidate their membership every 3-years through the accumulation of level-dependent credits on through enrolment onto the next formal coach education course on the pathway.
- As a British Orienteering Coaching Member, coaches must pay a nominal fee of £20 every time they revalidate, with this money contributing towards the creation, maintenance, and delivery of the four coach development options, alongside formal coach education courses on the pathway.
- If individuals take an extended break from coaching and do not revalidate their British Orienteering Coaching Membership (i.e., they do not obtain the requisite number of credits, or enrol onto the next course) then they will not be able to coach or deliver any orienteering session (possibly under licensing regulations) until their £20 fee is repaid and they have engaged/attended with at least one of the four coach development options. This will then kickstart the 3-year revalidation cycle once again.

Four coach development options to obtain ‘Coaching Credits’:

To meet the needs and preferences of all orienteering coaches in the UK, four coach development options are recommended to support coaches’ ongoing learning while providing multiple ways to obtain ‘Coaching Credits.’ These coach development options include both

online and in person content, in addition to new and existing provision. In building upon Participant 28's thoughts, rather than having an assigned co-ordinator, the 'Coaching Credits' framework functions as a system to manage coaches' learning journeys.

I wonder whether it would be possible for all BOF coaches to have a co-ordinator manage their coaching journey? There seems to be a presupposition that having completed your coaching training that that is the end of your requirements. (Participant 28, Survey)

As such, it is hoped the four coach development options presented below emphasise the need for coaches to continually learn and develop, beyond just attending formal coach education courses. Where possible, the rationale behind these recommended options have been supported by participants' thoughts within both the survey and focus groups.

Option 1: British Orienteering webinars

- 'Coaching Credits' awarded per British Orienteering webinar = 1 credit
- Duration = 1 hour
- Frequency = At least 1x per month

Currently, British Orienteering already provide a comprehensive webinar programme. In terms of topic areas, these are often more general and do not always touch upon coaching related issues. For example, recent content delivered via the webinar format include: 'Club Legal Structures,' 'The Importance of Strength and Conditioning for the older orienteer', and 'Marketing and Communications for your club'. These webinars have been received positively by coaches in attendance over the past few years:

The webinars during COVID-19 were the best recent provision. (Participant 35, Survey)

I mean, you just need to look at how learning has changed. It was driven by COVID. We're now all much more prepared to learn online. There were over 200 people attending the strength and conditioning for oldies webinars, and so people want to access these things and if they can access it from their armchair and easily, then it's been shown that they will do that. (Coach developer 2, FG4)

Due to their positive reception, some coaches have indicated that they would like a larger number of webinars delivered across the year.

Would like more webinar sessions across spread across the year. (Participant 11, Survey)

Furthermore, due to the broader and less ‘coaching-specific’ content areas being delivered within these webinars, it was argued that they could potentially be made available to orienteers and any other person of interest beyond just British Orienteering Coaching Members.

A lot of these [webinars] particularly the non-technical ones may be of, and I expect you know of interest to orienteers generally. I mean so far, we've just talked about you know a coaching pathway and how this develops. But as a relatively new orienteer you know a decade in let's say, you know, I might be interested to know a little bit more about healthy eating or you know how to deal with, you know, psychological elements of race preparation or whatever that, you know, I want to be able to dip into that as well rather than leaving it just for the coaches. (Bob, FG3).

Only individuals with a British Orienteering Coaching Membership would only be able to claim ‘Coaching Credits’ from their attendance, however, it is worth considering whether these webinars could be made accessible to a wider population. Due to their short duration i.e., around 1 hour, and non-coaching specific delivered content, 1 ‘Coaching Credit’ will be awarded to appropriate recipients.

Option 2: British Orienteering CPD modules

- ‘Coaching Credits’ awarded per British Orienteering CPD module = 2 credits
- Duration = 2 hours
- Frequency = At least 1x every 2/3 months

By far the biggest suggestion was the need to include optional CPD modules to enhance coach learning beyond content delivered within formal provision. Indeed, British Orienteering do currently offer select CPD options such as the ‘Coaching in Remote Areas’ course, however, this was argued to be the only one available:

The last course I attended was Coaching in Remote areas, back in 2017, which was actually run by JROS rather than BO. I am unaware what the pathway is meant to actually consist of? There is a diagram on the BOF coaches page, which describes 1) A variety of first steps 2) Coach Level 2 3) Modules 4) Coach Level 3 I believe this to be a fantasy. There are no Modules listed, and the only one I have ever been pointed to is the Coaching in Remote Areas. My understanding is that Coach Level 3 course was only ever run once over a decade ago. (Participant 25, Survey)

Yes, some add on courses should be added, like the remote area's session is at the moment. (Participant 34, Survey)

Once again, having online learning opportunities was seen as essential by participants, enabling them to access multiple content areas in an CPD format over time, rather than having to attend weekend courses which often clashed with their schedules.

The online courses following from lockdown have been a good idea and could do with more input and consolidation. (Participant 26, Survey).

Most training courses are infrequent and geographically constrained. Most people are not keen on driving hundreds of miles for a one-day course run every two years. More use could be made of teaching theory using the BOF eLearning schemes. (Participant 27, Survey)

Flexibility of learning. Lots of modules so you can build up achievement. (Participant 37, Survey)

Yeah, I'd probably agree. Like I potentially would be interested in doing kind of like shorter kind of things that are online that you know can count as CPD because I do think it's important. It's just having the time to go on like another weekend course or something. It's going to be tricky and essentially it will all be funded by us. (Jasmine, FG2)

The key distinction between CPD modules and the British Orienteering webinars discussed above is that on a fundamental level, the CPD modules are coaching specific i.e., they will also focus on a coaching related topic, pitched at an appropriate level for the audience. For example, CPD modules could focus on a coaching relating matter but pitched at those working within high-performance coaching contexts, or alternatively within grassroots settings.

I would like to see recognised modules to add on to a basic qualification, which would incentivise qualified coaches to keep learning and could be more tailored to appropriate settings. These could include coaching for different ages/standard, and on different terrain types but could also cover broader topics such as nutrition on residential camps. (Participant 14, Survey)

It would be better to create 'add-on' modules to cover niche topics (for example, I spend little time coaching elite athletes. Having detailed knowledge on doping and anti-doping legislation is not relevant to me. For others, this will be imperative). (Participant 28, Survey)

Providing CPD modules may also help to overcome the flaws associated with a linear formal coach education pathway. CPD modules offer coaches the chance to branch out and specialise in their own areas of interest or need.

But there's also plenty of club coaches who are only going to teach adult beginners. So again. Do they need to know how to look after 10-year-old children? And there are other people who are only ever going to teach kids and don't need to develop the different skills of how do you coach adults? There are no branches on the path to say right, this is the area that I'm interested in and if I want to get into involved with something later, I can come back to it and develop that skill... there's no there's no way of sort of shifting across the pathway. It's just one line. (Claire, FG3)

Hence while the CPD modules are coaching specific and allow coaches to develop content knowledge areas, in contrast, the British Orienteering webinars are generic and thus not always coaching focused. A situation arises here where the same CPD module could be delivered multiple times but tweaked slightly with a different coaching audience in mind i.e., Level 1, 2, or 3 coaches.

In terms of structure, it is proposed that CPD modules delivered online will last for 2-hours and be more interactive than a webinar. While taught content will be delivered, there will be discussion-based tasks and activities embedded throughout the duration of the module to encourage participant interaction and peer learning. It is hoped that over time, a 'menu' of CPD modules could be developed and delivered on a frequent basis (e.g., bimonthly) and coaches 'sign up' as and when fits their schedule to obtain the coaching credits. Within the survey data, coaches offered a few proposed topic areas which could be used for CPD modules:

I feel that some modular online self-service opportunities would be helpful. Geographically, we are thinly spread. Trying to find an appropriate, timely, local course is challenging in the extreme. The coaching could include updates in H&S, Safeguarding, technology, safe training for older orienteers for example. I feel they could also expand this concept to include other orienteering topics such as event organisation, course planning, O specific 1st aid and mapping. However, most people are just left to their own devices... These coaching development opportunities seem poorly considered. (Participant 28, Survey)

I feel it is quite comprehensive up to level 2. The other workshops (remote terrain) could be delivered more frequently. Some physical training / nutrition / psychology workshops could be useful for those hoping to develop further. There seems to be an underlying assumption that the coaching is aimed at children. While this is usually the case, it might be useful to have a bit more focus on coaching adult beginners, or other combinations. (Participant 29, Survey)

Modules available for different aspects of coaching depending on your area of coaching: school sessions, coaching older athletes, female health. (Participant 34, Survey)

Lifestyle, nutrition, physical conditioning, running skills, that kind of thing. I think there should be that opportunity for level 2 to be introduced to that and if people want to go

into Level 3, then they have a foundation base in those aspects. And then there can be further workshops to cater for those guys who are now working at Level 3 who it's the next step Part 2 or level two of development of those things. (Peter, FG3)

Nonetheless, a range of more generic topic areas are listed below. While appreciating that some are more realistic than others and 'titles' can be adapted and changed, the below provides a proposed menu which could be built up over time. The ones in red represent CPD modules which are available on the British Orienteering website. Some courses which are followed by the brackets and 'Level 1, 2, and 3' course represent CPD modules which could be tweaked and delivered with a specific audience of coach in mind.

- Coaching orienteering to children
- Coaching orienteering to adults
- **Introducing orienteering in Primary Schools (Introducing Orienteering course)**
- **Introducing orienteering in Secondary Schools**
- Coaching orienteering at an outdoor educational centre
- Coaching orienteering in urban areas
- Introduction to event roles (organiser, planning, controller, mapper)
- Working with female orienteers
- Working with disabled athletes
- Teaching navigation skills (Level 1, 2, and 3)
- Understanding safe coaching practice (Level 1, 2, and 3)
- Planning and reflecting on your coaching practice (Level 1, 2, and 3)
- **Introduction to updating Forest Mapping**
- **Event Safety Course**
- **Introducing Safeguarding Course**
- **Coaching in remote areas**
- Coaching night orienteering
- Coaching across different terrains
- Coaching sprint orienteering
- Coaching middle-distance orienteering
- Coaching long-distance orienteering
- Mentoring others to coach
- Developing a coaching philosophy (Level 1, 2, and 3)

- Coaching pedagogy and styles (Level 1, 2, and 3)
- Sport psychology for orienteering (Level 1, 2, and 3)
- **Introduction to updating Sprint and Urban Mapping**
- Periodisation and LTAD
- Strength and conditioning for high-performance orienteers: Implications for coaches
- Nutrition for high-performance orienteers: Implications for coaches
- Working with elite junior orienteers
- Working with elite senior orienteers
- Understanding eating disorders in high-performance sport: Implications for coaches

While providing coaches with a menu and autonomy over the CPD modules they choose to enrol in to obtain their ‘Coaching Credits’ is desired, some participants noted the potential downfall of this approach.

People always want to practice what they're good at, so rather than do their weaknesses and you get a lot more benefit from overcoming your weaknesses than you will ever do from improving your strengths. And if people self-select from a menu which modules they are going to do, I think they'll tend to do the some of the ones they're good at rather than pick the ones they hate and they never practice. So, I think it's quite important that... the assessor has some say in what modules they are going to choose from, so that they do cover the areas their weakest at. (Sidney, FG3)

Consequently, following completion of a formal coach education course, the coach developers delivering that provision might provide coaches with an ‘action plan’ i.e., identify possible CPD modules for the coach to engage with to help support their professional development. It is suggested that 2 ‘Coaching Credits’ would be awarded following attendance and engagement with an online CPD module, given that each CPD module should last at least 2 hours in duration.

Option 3: British Orienteering Regional Coaching Workshops

- ‘Coaching Credits’ awarded per British Orienteering regional coaching workshop = 3 credits
- Duration = 2-3 hours
- Frequency = At least 2-3x per year

Online coach development in the shape of British Orienteering webinars and CPD modules offers an accessible and flexible method of enhancing coach learning. However, in person and practical workshops are strongly desired by coaches. Indeed, when reflecting on what participants enjoy and find beneficial within the current coach education pathway, the opportunity to gain experience from other coaches in a practical environment is frequently cited.

Practical sessions which enable coaches to understand why linked sessions are good practice; the chance to share ideas and good practice through the coaching conferences and recent online provision for training (e.g., child protection) and CPD. (Participant 10, Survey)

Practical focus. Learning from genuinely knowledgeable tutors. Interaction with (and learning from) peers. (Participant 18, Survey)

Interactive workshops, practical experience with others. (Participant 29, Survey)

Therefore, while the British Orienteering CPD modules provide an accessible online method of coach development, Regional Coaching Workshops delivered by association representatives would offer an in-person learning opportunity for coaches. As such, informal discussions, observations, and questioning will be the focus, enabling coaches to simply watch others coach while networking and sharing ideas. It was argued that beyond the annual coaching conference, limited workshop and practical opportunities exist for this to occur.

Opportunities to take further courses tend to be very limited, and expensive in terms of time and travel. Opportunities to interact with other coaches outside of own club, very limited. (Participant 13, Survey)

Infrequent workshop opportunities, unless attending coaching conference. (Participant 29, Survey)

It is recommended that Regional Coaching Workshops should be delivered 2 to 3 times a year, with no longer than a 6-month gap between each workshop. The regional association representative would consult with all orienteering clubs within their region and find a club who are happy to 'host' and for coaches from elsewhere to attend their training night. Coaches from multiple clubs would then be able to meet at an agreed time, date, and place to observe session delivery. The role of the regional association representative would be to facilitate the workshop e.g., by organising discussions and questions throughout the evening to encourage critical reflection or by setting small tasks for coaches to complete. It is hoped this approach will also give regional association representatives greater responsibility to organise and facilitate coach

learning for others, where they would adopt a mentoring role and have a greater/much specific role and impact.

It is proposed Regional Coaching Workshops would last for 2-3 hours in duration, with opportunities for discussion and reflection taking place before and after session delivery. The delivered content or focus of the workshop would be led by the needs and wants of the coaches within that region, however, suggested topic areas could be provided by British Orienteering. It is suggested that 3 ‘Coaching Credits’ would be awarded following attendance and engagement at a regional coaching workshop.

Option 4: British Orienteering Coaching Conference

- ‘Coaching Credits’ awarded per British Orienteering Coaching Conference = 6 credits
- Duration = 1.5 days
- Frequency = 1x per year

In general, the annual coaching conference is warmly received, as evidenced in the previous report to British Orienteering. Once again, participants within this research spoke positively about their experiences of attending the conference, despite some concerns with the intended target audience with regards to some of the delivered content.

The coaching conference seems well organised although of limited value to elite level coaching. (Participant 9, Survey)

Regular coaching conferences [are beneficial], which enable continuous learning in a supportive and fun environment. (Participant 14, Survey)

Conference allows regular updates and contact points within the community. (Participant 22, Survey)

Nonetheless, while the British Orienteering Coaching Conference is considered a valuable opportunity to network and meet other likeminded coaches, there was a recognition that the annual conference is not overly accessible as a one-off event. Furthermore, when reflecting upon the current coach development offering, the conference is often seen as the ‘only’ opportunity to engage in CPD beyond the formal courses.

Yeah, I would have liked to have gone to the coaching conference, but it was long way. I think it was in the South this year, was it? (Jasmine, FG2)

Yeah, it was too far for me. But we had something else, I think it clashed with the November classic. I think it was, but there was a big event on, and they put the conference on at the same time as a big like national event. So timing, right? (Val, FG2)

Consequently, enabling online or adopting a hybrid approach to the conference was proposed as an alternative.

Coaching conference is very much 'be there or get nothing' (it was better when it was forced online by covid). (Participant 3, Survey)

I would be pushing for something like the coaching conference to have a hybrid bit as well. So, for instance, I couldn't travel to the last coaching conference in January and so I missed out on it. (Coach developer 2, FG4).

Moving forwards, ensuring the annual coaching conference is recorded and made available to those who cannot attend would seem worthwhile, alongside considering whether the date and location is accessible for the majority. Furthermore, while recognising that attending the annual coaching conference could constitute a total 1.5 days of coach development over a weekend, it is proposed that 6 'Coaching Credits' should be awarded to the coaches who attend. A final thought might be to condense the coaching conference into a 1-day event which is delivered twice per calendar year i.e., once in the Spring and once in Autumn. The conference could then also be delivered at separate venues e.g., one event in the North (Spring), and then one event in the South (Autumn), which may lead to greater attendance and engagement.

Additional option: British Orienteering Coaches Forum

The four coach development options discussed above will allow coaches to obtain 'Coaching Credits' to support their on-going coach learning alongside revalidating their coaching license every 3-years. Nevertheless, it was suggested by some participants that an online forum or something similar could be developed, to offer coaches a more defined and structured space to share ideas, resources, and thoughts virtually.

Limited sharing across coaches/limited support for younger coaches with non-sport related careers/no hot topic training modules to support basic techniques. (Participant 8, Survey)

Once completed there needs to be greater linked up sharing of resources and ideas. Having a coaching forum (I know there is a Facebook page, but no one uses it, and I only came across it by accident). Could there be an easily accessible area we can discuss sessions, what went well, what didn't and ask other people how they've done

that series of sessions? The course is a great place to link people into that forum. (Participant 30, Survey)

Often difficult to access situations for shared learning/development. Coach development is left to each individual or association. (Participant 32, Survey)

Consequently, the creation of a British Orienteering Coaches Forum is recommended. Over recent years, several NGBs (e.g., RFU, FA, ECB) have developed their own ‘coaching club’ or ‘coaches association’ which provide networking opportunities in addition to serving as a platform to share resources and session ideas. Whenever a coach completes an accredited course on the coach education pathway (including those at Level 0), they will automatically be given access to the ‘Coaches Forum’ platform. It is likely that the platform would take the form of a discussion board, where threads, news, and content can easily be accessed and shared online. While this coach development option would not provide individuals with any ‘Coaching Credits,’ it is seen as an additional resource which might help to develop a greater community feel amongst coaches and encourage informal learning.

Summary and timeline:

It is acknowledged that the recommendations made above will take considerable time, funding, and effort to implement and are not to be considered as a ‘quick fix’ or ‘easy win.’ They are, however, needed to emphasise the importance of professional learning and development for British Orienteering coaches, which is encouraged through having multiple and variable learning opportunities.

I think that that we need to do this and just get it to going and make people realise, you know, yes, you have a responsibility to keep yourself up to date. I think that if we can do that, you know, if we've got the CPD modules that appeal to them that they get going and it's low key enough, it's a lot lower key than we actually had when we had the logbook and the licensing scheme and this that and the next thing. But if we can do this, make it reasonably friendly for these coaches coming in and I think that's the important thing that they see it as achievable as well, yeah... people have the choice and I think that's important, you're giving them choice here. You're not forcing them down a particular avenue. You're saying you have to, you know, maintain your license or whatever we call it, you need to do this, but you have a range, a menu, so to speak. (Coach developer 2, FG4)

Appreciating the logistical aspects, the below represents a brief ‘recommendations timeline’ for when changes to the on-going coach development options could be implemented between

now and the end of 2025. Please note, this timeline only focuses on the proposed four coach development options described above and no other formal coach education provision.

July to December 2023 – Over the first 6 months, efforts should be made to develop and introduce the British Orienteering Coaching Membership, ensuring that the ‘Coaching Credits’ format and initial ideas are disseminated and understood. A system to track ‘Coaching Credits’ should be created, and individuals should pay the nominal fee to join. During these first 6 months, 2-4 new webinars and 1-3 CPD modules should be designed and delivered to kick start the credit obtaining process, while planning should commence for the first Regional Coaching Workshops to take place in 2024, alongside the Coaching Conference.

January to June 2024 – During the next 6 months, attention should be paid to further developing an extensive menu of British Orienteering webinars and CPD modules, ensuring there is a relevant blend of content areas and target coaching audiences. An extensive recruitment and training period will be required to maintain a healthy number of coach developers who are available to deliver these online learning opportunities. Furthermore, it is hoped the first Regional Coaching Workshops will be delivered during the Spring period, while planning should be underway for the second workshops to occur in the Autumn months. It is likely that the British Orienteering Coaching Conference will be delivered during this period, considering the last conference took place in January 2023.

July to December 2024 – Once again, continued refinement and development of British Orienteering webinars and CPD modules should occur. At this point a wide range of options should be available, and webinars/CPD modules might be on a second round of delivery. However, it is an on-going process to monitor and evaluate the success of this online provision, while remaining open to modifications and potentially new topic areas. The second Regional Coaching Workshops should look to also be delivered in the early Autumn period, building upon the feedback and evaluation of the first workshop delivery. It is also proposed that during this 6-month period, planning and designing of British Orienteering’s Coaching Forum should take place, with roundtable discussions focusing on what this format of coach learning support might entail and involve.

January to June 2025 - During this period, a focus should be on releasing the British Orienteering Coaching Forum, in addition to the continued redevelopment of online learning

opportunities. It is also worth reflecting at this point on the design and delivery of the Regional Coaching Workshops and whether more face-to-face provision needs to be offered, or whether this current format needs to be tweaked to provide meaningful learning opportunities for coaches.

July to December 2025 – By the end of 2025, a comprehensive list of British Orienteering coaching webinars and CPD modules should be finalised, while being constantly updated and modified. At this stage, it might be worth reflecting on the current coach developer workforce and whether more individuals need to be employed within this role to continue the successful delivery and scale of this provision. The impact of the Coaching Forum can also be evaluated at this stage, while seeking feedback from coaches on how this resource can be best used to meet user needs.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to critically analyse British Orienteering's coach education provision, while offering recommendations for future practice. Both the survey and focus group data were analysed via thematic analysis and resulted in the creation of five themes which capture coaches' perspectives towards British Orienteering's current coach education pathway and provision: (1) Accessibility of coach education; (2) Promotion, dissemination, and awareness of coach education; (3) Participant interaction and practical delivery; (4) Assessment procedures and the role of coach developers; and (5) Content and structure of current provision. Furthermore, in building upon the suggestions, preferences, and thoughts of both coaches and coach developers, three primary recommendations are made for British Orienteering to enhance and develop future coach education: (1) (Re)introducing Level 1 and 3 coach education provision; (2) Avoid fast tracking in coach education; and (3) Coaching membership and ongoing coach development.

The findings of this research provide British Orienteering with a comprehensive understanding of coaches' experiences of, and perceptions towards, the current coach education pathway and learning opportunities the organisation offers. In critically analysing these perspectives, recommendations to improve future provision are outlined, which are grounded in the suggestions and ideas of orienteering coaches and coach developers. While acknowledging the logistical constraints associated with designing and delivering additional coach education provision for coaches, it is believed these recommendations offer feasible solutions which can be modified further to help contribute towards the 2025 Strategic Plan and beyond.

While the three primary recommendations have been made and discussed in depth within the report, the following points below offer more general feedback for British Orienteering to consider with any coach education and development provision moving forwards. Once again, these suggestions are grounded in the perspectives and experiences of coaches and coach developers.

- **Increase the coach developer workforce** – considering only 4 individuals responded to the coach developer survey, there is an evident need to recruit and train more coaches

as coach developers, especially giving the increased scale of coach education and development options recommended within this report. British Orienteering have relied upon the same small cohort of coach developers for a considerable amount of time and are in desperate need of an increased workforce to support with both current and future delivery.

- **Accessibility** – while a generic point, participants within this research project stated that they feel the current coach education pathway is not accessible in terms of time, cost, locations, duration, amongst other logistical barriers. Any new provision, including those recommended within this report, must be accessible to avoid discouraging future attendance and engagement with formal learning opportunities.
- **Practical opportunities** – the COVID-19 pandemic emphasised that online learning is viable and appeals to the needs and preferences of coaches. Therefore, several suggestions within this report have recommended that online learning in various shapes should be included in future provision. Nonetheless, the participants within this report highlighted the significant value of in person learning opportunities as a means of sharing current ideas and interacting with others. Hence, while more costly and logistically challenging, in person practical opportunities should be designed and encouraged.
- **Promotion and dissemination of courses** – intrinsically linked to accessibility, several participants questioned the advertisement of courses delivered by British Orienteering. Many outlined that they had a general lack of awareness regarding current courses and felt the organisation could do more to promote and share learning opportunities and resources which might be available.
- **Aging coaching workforce** – this aspect was highlighted within the last report to British Orienteering and is still a current issue. The average age of coaches in this research was 62, with coach developers averaging an age of 72. These individuals clearly possess a wealth of knowledge and experience which should be harnessed to support a new generation of orienteering coaches and coach developers. More needs to be done to address this issue between now and 2025.
- **Avoid UKCC alignment** – given the nature of orienteering as a sport, it is suggested that British Orienteering might be better off having greater control and autonomy over course structure, learning outcomes, and format. This is likely to be achieved by moving

away from a UKCC framework, which as evidenced throughout, poses several challenges to coach education obtainment.

Coach education can often be considered an easy target for critique. Provision will never please everyone and its impact is always likely to be variable. Nonetheless, it is hoped this report has provided British Orienteering with further ‘food for thought’ with regards to both their current and future provision

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