



# How to educate tutors: LTA certificate in tutoring.

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## ABSTRACT

The present article reviews the main competency areas for training tutors within the LTA. The article discusses key aspects including climate setting, learning facilitation, assessment, and what skills a tutor should hold to maximise the learning curve for coaches during coach education courses.

**Key words:** Coach education, Tutor skills, Assessment, Learning facilitation.

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## INTRODUCTION

For many years coach education tutors were selected by the LTA. These tutors tended to be coaches that were seen as having done well in coaching and that would hopefully have something to offer in coach education. This selection method did work well in many ways; however, there were clear flaws such as a lack of transparency in selection procedures and a lack of training for those selected.

In 2005 the UK Government through its lead agency for coaching, 'SportscoachUK', introduced an endorsement process for coach education programmes called the United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC). UKCC endorsement meant that a qualification had to have a number of quality control mechanisms in place, checked by SportscoachUK through the endorsement process. One essential criteria in order for endorsement, was to have a coach-education workforce- which should comprise of tutors, assessors and verifiers (see SportscoachUK, 2011).

As many National Governing Bodies of sport in the UK were going through the same process at the time, a generic 'tutor training for sport' qualification was offered by the ScUK. The course was well received across all sports, however it was quickly recognised that tennis had specific needs - this was such an important area that it warranted a tennis specific qualification delivered by the LTA.

This article will focus on how the coach education workforce element within the LTA coach education structure is implemented. It will also discuss how tutors that train coaches need to be appropriately qualified in how to educate coaches, in order for the course to be officially recognised.

## COMPETENCIES

The starting point for designing the course for tutors was to identify the competencies that effective tutors possess; this could then drive the content of the delivery phase of the course.

Candidates coming into the course are already skilled coaches and many of those skills are highly transferable into coaching and need not be covered on the qualification. Development of the competencies evolved out of understanding and discussing what a coach education tutor does and how their roles differs from being a coach, this became the area of focus for the course.

### **The main competency areas for the LTA Certificate in Tutoring skills are:**

- Climate setting – ensuring a learner centred environment
- Structuring and delivering a learning session
- Facilitation skills

- Working with a co-tutor
- Assessment

### 1. Climate setting

The learning climate on a course is the key factor to its success. A successful course is one where the coaches understand that they are there to develop to be the best they can be, and where they also believe that the tutors are genuinely there to support that learning. Courses will be highly effective if the tutor can develop a course where feedback and mistakes are valued by the coaches as learning opportunities rather than to be avoided at all costs. To help set this learner orientated environment LTA qualifications have independent assessment, which allows the tutors on the course to really be there to help the coach to improve.

Prospective tutors are trained to understand the significance of the course climate, how they can affect it and how the climate changes at different stages of a course; from the nervous start where no one knows anyone else through establishing friendships with other course members and then finally to assessment.

They work on how to set the climate through building relationships, between the tutor and coaches and between the coaches on the course who can learn from and support each other; developing competence through personal best and clarifying the assessment process early in the course.



### 2. Structuring and delivering a learning session

This section of the course starts by developing the trainee tutors' understanding of the significance of course aims. It is from the aims that each session on a course has learning objectives and it is from these outcomes that the specific content is developed which will empower the coach to meet the competencies at the end of the course. The learning aims

and objectives are set for each session on the course and by working from these the trainee tutor will develop a series of steps that build towards achieving the outcome with their session content.

Coaches are experts at setting optimal practice situations for their players. Through experience, an increasingly significant area of this course is helping the trainee tutors understand the types of learning activity that they can set for their coaches. Helping a group of highly skilled coaches to step back and allow others to coach, make mistakes and develop takes time. The course gives lots of examples of how they can get their coaches thinking and working as coaches and how they can step back and facilitate the learning and improvement.

### 3. Facilitation skills

The 'softer' skills of coach education are:

- Questioning
- Feedback
- Goal setting
- Listening

Again these are skills that the trainee tutors have coming into the course as experienced coaches. However, they need help to understand how to use them with adult learners and how to use them in a course environment that involves assessment.



During the course the trainee tutors are consistently given the task of facilitating learning with one of their peers after a learning activity. One of the most valuable things they take away from the course is the model on how to facilitate feedback and discussion following a practical session. The skill of receiving, sorting, clarifying and summarising feedback is something that is new to most of the trainee tutors.

#### 4. How to work with a co tutor

Most LTA qualifications are delivered by two tutors. Generally this is a great addition to the course; however, it does require some understanding of how to work together. The trainee tutors work through how to operate as a lead tutor and a second tutor. They start to see how as the lead tutor you have to include and maximise the benefit of the second tutor and also how as the second tutor you need to support rather than interfere, disagree or disappear!

#### 5. Assessment

Assessment is perhaps the tutoring skill that the experienced coaches coming onto the course have the least experience. Understandably it is also the area that they are the most anxious about.

All LTA qualifications are assessed. Levels 1, 2 and 3 are UKCC endorsed, (see 1st4sport, 2011). Levels 4 and 5 are LTA qualifications. The assessment will consist of a portfolio of evidence to show work they are doing away from the qualification and how this meets the course competencies, the other element of assessment will be through practical delivery of group and or individual lessons (depending on the level of qualification).

The trainee tutors learn and practice how to assess based on the stated course competencies and assessment methods. They develop an understanding of good practice so that they can assess fairly and make judgements that stand up to rigour if and when a decision is challenged.

#### SUMMARY

Developing the LTA Certificate in tutoring skills has been one of the most positively received LTA initiatives in recent years. Many coaches have really welcomed the opportunity to develop a new set of skills to compliment their existing coaching skills. Also the message that there is now an open

career path into working in Coach Education has been positive and helped build even stronger relationships with many experienced coaches working in the field. For an overview of the LTA Coaching Qualification structure see

[www.lta.org.uk/Coaches-coaching-assistants/Coach-education-structure/](http://www.lta.org.uk/Coaches-coaching-assistants/Coach-education-structure/)

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