A Report in the Learner, Assessor and Home Country Administrator Experiences of the British Athletics Blended Coach Education Offer

Introduction and Context

This coach level review has been developed in response to call to evaluate the effectiveness of the British Athletics response to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent adoption of a blended approach to the delivery of Coach Education. The review of the move to a blended approach to delivery across the Coach Level qualifications also includes a review of the effectiveness of some blended learning pathways implemented before the Covid-19 pandemic and includes Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment (ROPA). This is part of a wider review of the Coach Education offer, including the blended offer within Coaching Assistant (CA) and Leader in Running Fitness (LiRF).

Methodology

The scope of the review was limited to gathering data regarding experiences and effectiveness of Coach level qualifications, and as such followed a three-part process. "Effectiveness" was defined using several different metrics including ease of access, time for completion, perceptions of standards of coaching practice and user (Learner, Tutor/Assessor and Administrator) experiences. It is acknowledged that it is virtually impossible to review "effectiveness" of a coach education, as perceptions of effectiveness differ depending upon the lens that is applied. It is for this reason that an iterative process of data collection was adopted, so that previously identified themes could be used to inform subsequent lines of enquiry.

The first part of the review sought to gather information regarding administrative processes and to capture feedback from Home Country adoption. This initial more open data collection gathering process sought to then shape themes of enquiry for the subsequent two parts of the review. This initial review influenced not only the themes of subsequent reviews, but also the scope of those subsequent reviews. As a result of the initial review, the focus of Coach-level narrowed to review blended versions of Athletics Coach only. The second and third parts of the review sought to understand the effectiveness and experiences of the blended offer as defined by the perceptions of the Assessors who assessed Coach Level qualifications, and then the learners on the programmes.

The first stage of the review was an individual semi-structured interview with members of staff who were identified within each Home Country who are charged with the administration of Athletics Coach Level courses. These semi-structured interviews were conducted remotely using MS-Teams being recorded and subsequently transcribed using the Transcription function. The interview questions explored the following three themes: Offers and Numbers, Online and Blended Administration and Assessor/Learner Experiences and Future Focus. Draft questions were sent to the three participants who responded to the invitation to participate in advance to ensure time was given to reflect and collect data. The second stage of the review sought to understand both the Tutors/Assessor experiences and those of the candidates who had completed either or both a Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Module and/or a Remotely Observed Practical Assessment. Data was captured using an Online Questionnaire that was created using Google Forms and disseminated to the relevant Tutor/Assessors by Home Country Administrators. The third stage of the review sought to understand Learners experiences who had completed again either or both a Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Module and/or a Remotely Observed Practical Assessment. Once more, data was captured using an Online Questionnaire that was created using Google Forms although this time it was

disseminated to those who had completed by the British Athletics Coach Education team. A deadline of the 30th September was set for the completion of both Online Questionnaire.

Summary of Results

The participants for each stage of the review were as follows: Stage One 3, Stage Two 6 and Stage Three 22. There were 4 tutors who responded from England, and 1 each from Scotland and Wales. Of the 22 Learners who responded, 15 were from England, 3 were from Scotland and 4 were from Wales. At the point of data capture Northern Ireland did not have any Learners who had completed a full blended cycle and therefore data could not be collected from either Learners or Tutors.

From Administrators

Reflecting upon the Coach Education offer and future focus, there has been a very mixed uptake of both the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment. One of the Home Countries has chosen to move all their provision after Day 1 and 2 to the Online offer, asking candidates to complete Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment. Another of the Home Countries had very small numbers with only a very small number having completed the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and none having yet completed ROPA. The other Two Home Countries have a mixed economy with Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment, although the numbers of ROPA for these two Home Countries is low. All of the Home Country administrators cited the importance of a blended offer for either geographically remote or for those coaches who wish to complete the less popular Event Groups such as Throws and Jumps.   Reasons cited included a reduction in distance travelled for both learner and tutor/assessor and ensuring delivery was cost effective. One of the Home Countries suggested that they would be continuing with the sole offer of Day 3 and 4 being completed online and remotely, whilst the other two administrators suggested that the blended offer would be continued to be part of a wider offer, including face to face delivery of Day 3 and 4. Two of the three administrators suggested that it would be useful to gather more information about the effectiveness of the blended offer before a more concreate decision was made. The feedback from Home Countries about their experiences of administration of the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment course was consistent, albeit with a wide range of numbers completing. The Home Country with the most numbers of completers suggested that the process of attaching Learners was straight forward and once this was worked into working patterns, it was manageable. However, the ability to track individual learners progress was cited to be challenging. Further to this, without any set timescales for completion given to the Learners, there was a feeling that there was a significant amount of "assessment drift".   Indirect feedback from both Learners and Assessors (as described by Home Countries, was varied. Overall, the feedback was positive, although Home Countries did cite some challenges with IT (Information Technology) literacy for some Learners and Assessors, which had created additional barriers.

From Assessors

Assessors shared a reasonable level of IT literacy, with 4 tutors ranking their skills at 4 out of 5 and another 2 ranking themselves at 3 out of 5. This seemed to corelate with a perception of access to the Dreams platform being easy with all tutors stating it was easy or very easy. 3 tutors suggested they had difficulties which ranged from being able to track messages sent, the number of clicks to access relevant information and supporting learners in uploading videos. The individual time for candidates

to complete ROPA was cited as being varied, although some significant delays were experienced, with some Learners taking months to complete. In terms of length of time reviewing practical elements of assessment, most assessors thought this took either much longer (4 out of 6) or a little longer (1 out of 6). Only one assessor thought it took the same amount of time. Only 2 out of 6 tutors reported that all elements of assessment, including consent forms and videos, were submitted through Dreams, with the rest stating that documents were sent in other ways.

9. How did the average time to complete an individual learners assessment compare to the full timings of face to face Observed Practical Assessments (including group and individual briefings, practical set up etc)?

More Details

🔵 Much longer	4	
🟠 A little longer	1	
🟢 About the same	1	
🔴 A little shorter	0	
🟣 Much shorter	0	

10. Did all participants submit consent forms and coaches declaration prior to (or with) the filmed footage?

More Details

🔵 Yes - all	3	
🟠 No - only some did	3	
🟢 No - only a small number did	0	
🔴 No - none	0	

When reflecting on the overall standard of Knowledge (What 2) and Skills (How 2), all assessors reported that overall standards were at least the same as in face-to-face assessments, and half stating they were of a higher standard. 4 of the 6 assessors suggested that the standard of Mesocycle and Profiling documentation was higher than in face-to-face assessments, with one stating they were lower. There was a common theme that the higher levels could be attributed to the less pressured environment for assessment and more freedom to offer timely support through the process. Levels of support offered to tutors was well received for those that have accessed.

16. Overall, how would you rate the standard of learning of the participants on completion of the qualification in comparison to the previous face to face delivery method?

More Details

- ● Higher overall standard — 3
- ● Standards were comparable w... — 3
- ● Lower overall standard — 0
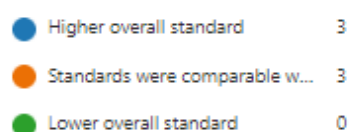
From Learners

There was a greater variety of expressed IT literacy with 4 learners stating they have excellent IT skills and 3 learners stating it was poor or very poor. Very few learners (4 out 16) said that the timings between completing day 2 and accessing the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules a were positive (good or excellent). However, 18 out of 22 respondents Day three were affected by Covid restrictions and was confirmed as such within several open text responses. 9 out of 16 responses suggested that the self-guided modules were easy to use and navigate, although comments were made regarding the poor synchronisation of speech to text, and a lack of an ability to navigate backward and forward. 10 out of 16 learners reported that the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules increased levels of knowledge in the event area, although several open text comments suggested a wish to reinforce elements of learning through practical activities.

14. How would you rate the improvement in your knowledge of the topics covered, following completion of the self-guided online modules?

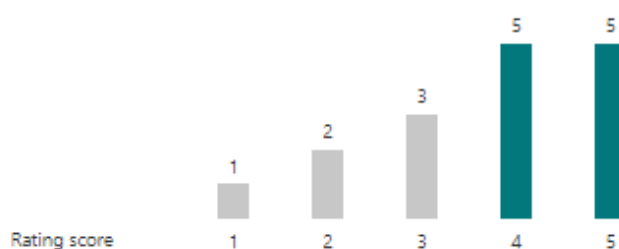Rating Scale: 0 = Very Poor; 5 = Excellent

More Details   💡 Insights

16
Responses

3.69
Average Number

63% rated between "4-5"

Score distribution

Rating score	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	5	5

The overriding strength of the self-guided online modules expressed by learners was that they could be completed in the learners' own time and at their own pace. Areas for development included ensuring videos played more effectively and raising learners' awareness regarding the details of the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules on Days 1 and 2. Of the 16 people surveyed who had started the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment, only 7 had completed the entire process. Of the 13 people who responded, 9 responded positively to the amount of time offered to complete.

19. Please rate the appropriateness of the timescales given to complete the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment following completing all taught content (Day 1 and 2 and Technical Content).
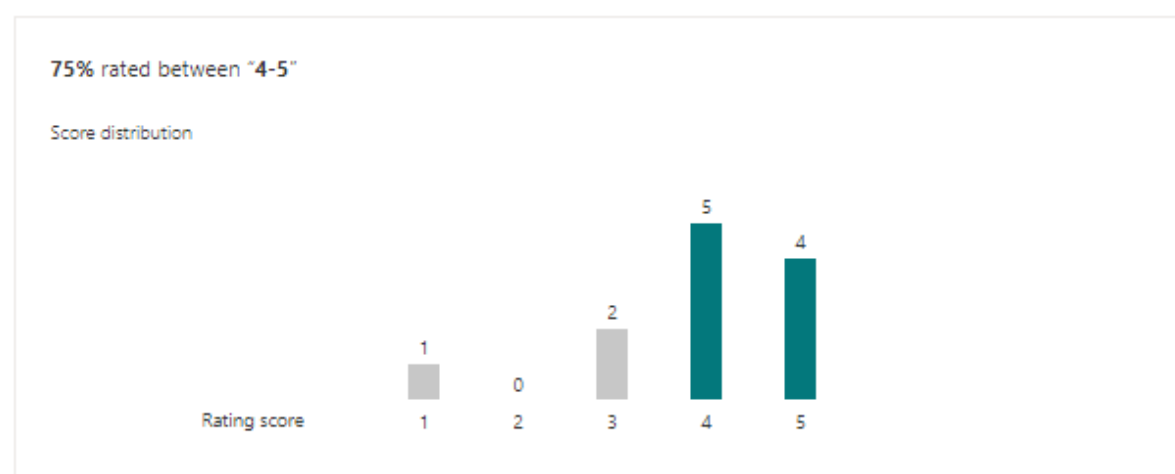
Rating Scale: 0 = Very Poor; 5 = Excellent

More Details   Insights

13
Responses

3.92
Average Number

75% rated between "4-5"

Score distribution

8 out of 13 learners stated that Dreams was easy or very easy to navigate, although those who struggled, cited challenges with navigation and uploading documents and video files. 8 out of 13 learners stated that timeliness of feedback was good or excellent, with 6 of those reporting in the most positive category. When exploring open text comments, when communications happened, the assessors were very helpful, with feedback being rated as good or excellent by 9 out of 13 learners. Interestingly, the remaining learners rated it as very poor. Fewer learners rated the assessment support on MyLearning as being positive, with 7 out of 13 learners with the same number of learners stating that the Dreams platform was easy or very easy to use.

21. How easy was it to access and navigate around the DREAMS platform?

Rating Scale: 1 = Very Hard; 5 = Very Easy

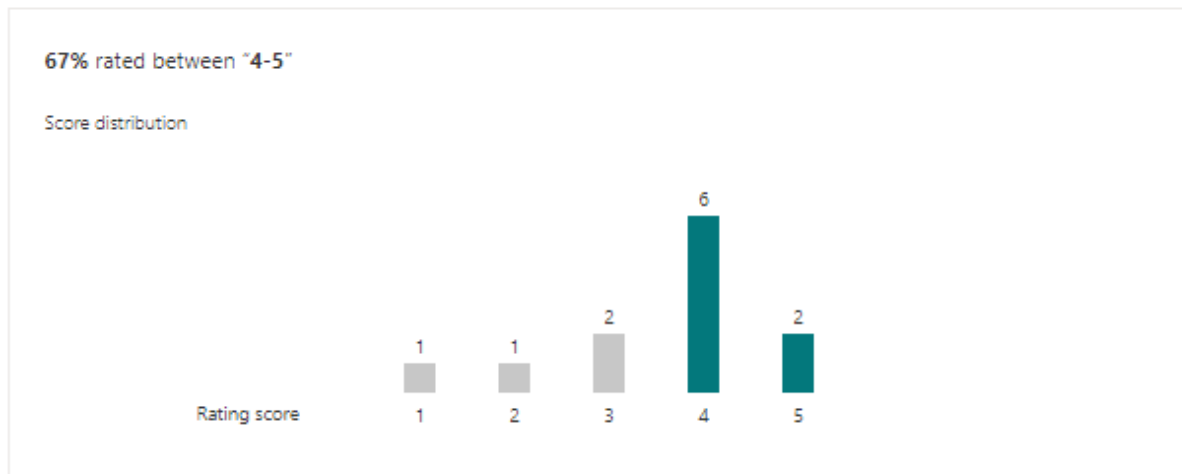If your rating is 3 or below, please comment below

More Details   💡 Insights

13
Responses

3.46
Average Number

67% rated between "4-5"

Score distribution

The overall strengths of being assessed this way were consistent, with the assessment taking place in a more authentic and less stressful environment being cited with 8 out of 13 learners commenting using similar phrases. Other strengths cited including not having to travel and the process taking longer meaning that there were opportunities to increase the quality of coaching. Although several learners expressed a desire to remove this element of the process, two learners expanded by suggesting changes to the software system to allow multiple file uploads more streamlined, along with adding some additional support post day three.

Discussion of Results and Potential Conclusions

Any conclusions to be made from the review of Administrator, Assessor and Learner experiences, have to be taken within the context of fairly small participant numbers. It is likely that respondents to online data collection tools often wish to report perceptions of very good or very bad experiences, which may skew the views expressed in this report. However, notwithstanding these issues, there are several themes that seem to be emerging.

There is a difference in expressed Learner perceptions of the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment. Overall, the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules were better received than the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment. However, the strength of opinion expressed regarding the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment was more so than the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules. Those that liked the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment, really liked it, and saw the benefits, with those that did not like it, expressing equally as strong views. This seemed to be reflected within the experiences of the assessors who reported a variety of learner experiences.

Administrators expressed that both the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment had a role to play within Coach Education, although cited challenges in both tracking completions and reporting. The freedom to work asynchronously and at the learners' pace was seen as both a positive, but also led to the possibility of non-completion as progress slipped.

The assessors sited an increase in the amount of time to complete individual assessment and the length of the entire assessment process, as potential negatives, but importantly did reflect upon the overall standard of assessments as being the same if not better than face to face assessment processes.

Tentative conclusions from this report would be to suggest that both the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules and the Remotely Observed Practical Assessment remain part of the menu of modes to complete the Athletics Coach following face to face days 1 and 2. The Remotely Observed Practical Assessment could be offered as a choice for leaners, to allow those who have a particular preference to this mode, or those who for logistical reasons struggle to access Day 4 assessment. It could also be used for those who have other needs to access remotely, such as those with Reasonable Adjustments or who have a need of reassessment. There seems to be slightly more evidence to suggest a more widespread adoption of the Athletics Coach Day Three Event Group Modules, with less negative opinion being expressed, and could be a more effective way of completing certain event groups such as Throws and Jumps.