



Equestrian Coaching

Culture, Clarity, Profile and Value

A strategy for coaching in equestrian sport for 2020 to 2025





Foreword

The following coaching strategy is a shared vision, shaped by members of the Coaching Development Action Team (CDAT). It sets out to create a coaching legacy that will make a positive difference to coaches, participants and equines alike. The strategy will act as a reference point for the development of coaching across the equestrian industry. At times, this will entail collaborative approaches to meet outcomes and, at other times, individual Member Bodies will find their own solutions to the actions in the strategy.

In the overall context of growing participation in equestrian activity (1.8 million riders in 2019), the need for quality coaching and high-performing coaches is essential for sustaining and growing participation. This strategy deals with three key thematic areas that identify how coaches can be supported to deliver great coaching to participants, reach recognised standards, and feel more valued and supported in their role. There is a clear purpose and set of principles on which the strategy is founded, and these guide the actions and outcomes sought.

It has been both gratifying and exciting to work alongside a committed group of coaching specialists to produce this strategy. A special thanks to David Padgen, who has crafted many editions of the strategy to get it to this finished point – his patience and ability to capture the thinking of CDAT is commendable.

Finally, the full value of this strategy will only be realised over time when the impact and outcomes are being realised, ensuring that coaching is a strength across the British equestrian landscape.

Nicky Fuller
Chair of CDAT

Each person holds so much power within themselves that needs to be let out. Sometimes they just need a little nudge, a little direction, a little support, a little coaching, and the greatest things can happen.

Pete Carroll

Coaching in every sport presents its own unique challenges, but the factor that sets equestrian coaching apart from other sports is the combination of long-term participant development alongside long-term equine development. This philosophy underpins everything we seek to achieve through this strategy, which provides a foundation for the activity that the members of the Coaching Development Action Team (CDAT) will collectively deliver.

Our coaching workforce extends to not only coaches, but also coach developers, mentors, tutors and assessors, too. They all play vital roles in delivering this strategy.



What is CDAT?

The Coach Development Action Team (CDAT) is an advisory group to the management of British Equestrian and its partner Member Bodies, in relation to all work connected to coaching, teaching and instructing.

What is an equestrian coach?

In this strategy, we define an equestrian coach as someone who develops a participant's skills, knowledge and confidence to improve their experience in any equestrian activity by providing specialised support and guidance, who meets individual needs, goals and aspirations and who puts the welfare of the horse at the centre of what they do.



Principles

This strategy is intended to:

- Be insight-led, driven by the needs of our coaches and prospective coaches
- Be person-focused in relation to both the end user and the coach, to provide them with clarity, confidence and support, and to ensure professionalism
- Help us – British Equestrian and our Member Bodies – as organisations to work collectively to support the wellbeing of our coaching workforce
- Develop a system of continuous professional development (CPD) that engages coaches in varied lifelong learning, enabling them to be as professional and high-performing as possible
- Provide an inclusive and accessible pathway for any potential, aspiring and current coaches
- Engender a collaborative culture of sharing between organisations, parties and partners, to deliver the best service to coaches and participants
- Innovate how we support coaches and encourage coaches to be innovative
- Have the welfare of the horse at the centre in all that we do in coaching.

Purpose

We want every participant to have access to the **right coach** at the **right time**, and for that coach to be able to provide the best possible experience for the participant.

Participant groups

Our coaches work in different environments with different participants, while adapting their behaviour and coaching style to suit the setting and the participant. Coaches should be supported to ensure they are able to work effectively with underrepresented populations because these feature in all the participant groups.

The participant groups that we have identified are:

Riders up to the age of 12 of all abilities, from learning to ride to training and competing

Teenagers of all abilities, from learning to ride to riding for pleasure, training and competing outside of talent programmes

Adult participation riders over the age of 18 of all abilities, from learning to ride to riding for pleasure, training, and competing for personal wellbeing and personal goals at a range of levels

Adult competitive riders over the age of 18, with a focus on being competitive against others. These riders will train with the aim of competing successfully and moving up the levels

Performance development riders who are identified for the talent pathway programme and squads, working towards senior high-performance

High-performance riders who are selected to represent their country

N.B. To make this document as easy to read as possible, we use the terms 'ride', 'riders' and 'riding' to include carriage driving and vaulting.

Motivations and insights

Coaching has a huge impact on regular participation. According to the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) panel survey in 2018, 70% of participants who receive coaching ride four times a week or more. For those who do not receive any coaching, only 30% ride four times a week or more.

We have gathered data about what the major drivers are for participants in seeking a coach, and in using the coach(es) they use. We have found the drivers change dependant on the participant group they are in.

Understanding these motivations will help us to develop a system that will ensure participants have access to the right coach at the right time in their journey.

In 2019, British Equestrian conducted a comprehensive survey of equestrian coaches², which showed:

- Only 5% of respondents coach a single participant group
- 97% of respondents who primarily work with participation riders (under-12s, teenagers and adult participation) coach more than one discipline
- 44% of coaches primarily work with performance riders (adult competitive riders, performance development riders and elite performance riders)
- 70% of respondents work voluntarily in equestrian activities alongside their coaching



1. For example, disabled participants, black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
2. The 2019 British Equestrian Coaches Survey is available to download from the British Equestrian website.

Themes

We have identified the following common themes and challenges, which this strategy will seek to address and deliver the resulting actions across the federation.

Culture	Profile & Value	Clarity
Developing a person-centred culture that provides leading support to coaches and participants.	Raising the profile of coaching in our sport at all levels, and of the equestrian coaching workforce wherever they work.	Provide a clear and simple explanation of pathways into and through coach development.
Developing a culture of continual self-improvement and lifelong learning.	Maximising the value of qualifications in the equestrian coaching workforce, both to the coach and to the participant.	Establish collaborative working practices to ensure coaches receive clear guidance and support throughout their journey.
Developing an inclusive coaching culture, where any participant can embark on and progress through the coaching pathway	Understanding the scale of the impact that coaching has on our sport.	Communicate clear messages to coaches and the participating public.

CULTURE

We believe that by establishing the right culture for coaching in our sport, we will be able to not only attract the best coaches, but also retain and enhance their skills. We believe this impact will be mirrored in growing the number of participants in our sport by providing a greater number and better quality of experiences.



Culture: Theme 1

Developing a person-centred culture that provides leading support to coaches and participants

What does this mean?

In the context of this strategy, being 'person-centred' refers to having knowledge and understanding of participants' motivations, abilities and limitations, so that coaches and the participants they work with have the best possible experiences and outcomes as a result of coaching. The result of this strategy is to attract, retain and sustain participants in equestrian activity. As a federation of Member Bodies we would extend this person-centred philosophy to the way we support and work with our coaching workforce, ensuring that we look after their wellbeing as well as their development and learning needs.



What will we do?

- Promote the person-centred message to our coaches as our culture and approach. For example, our coaching publications and podcasts would include how the featured coach adopts a person-centred approach
- Enable more relevant and targeted CPD
- Ensuring this culture is embedded into the delivery of our coaching courses from the very start (Intro to Coaching and Level 1 courses)
- Ensure this culture positively impacts the way we as organisations support and guide our coaches

Culture: Theme 2

Developing a culture of continual self-improvement and lifelong learning

What does this mean?

By developing a culture of continual self-improvement and lifelong learning, we mean: 'creating an agreed set of beliefs and values where all coaches seek to continually develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours, regardless of experience and context in which they coach'.

For the purpose of this coaching strategy theme, we have defined lifelong learning outside of qualifications and compliance training as continual professional development (CPD).

From the results of our coaches' survey, we found an understandable preference among respondents for CPD with technical content – 92% said they were interested in this. However simply having technical knowledge alone doesn't automatically make better coaches. In addition, we need to provide support and opportunities for coaches to improve their skills in conveying the technical expertise in the most effective way across different participant groups.



Traditionally, CPD has tended to focus on technical knowledge of subject matter content for example specific dressage movements, and to a lesser extent coaching practice. More recently, perhaps, there has also been focus on sciences that support riders, such as rider psychology and physiology. We believe that to develop well-balanced coaches, CPD should cover four key areas:

Interpersonal skills – supporting coaches in their interaction with others, including engagement, communication, methods and practice of coaching, and leadership

Intrapersonal skills – growing self-awareness as a coach, including emotional intelligence, self-reflection and personal development planning

Supporting the rider – developing knowledge and skills to support the development of the rider, including biomechanics, physical and mental development, and technical and tactical development

Supporting the horse – developing knowledge and skills to support the development of the horse, including fitness and training, behaviour and handling, tack and equipment, and care and management

What will we do?

- Identify what CPD coaches should aim to achieve over a period of time, and how this will be measured and authenticated
- Collectively ensure we provide a broad range of learning and development opportunities that cover all four of the areas identified above
- Produce a centrally held CPD calendar of formal learning
- Provide information to coaches around what CPD is and why it is important.
- Provide a means of categorising learning opportunities to make it easier for coaches to select the right choices that result in balanced learning
- Agree expectations of CPD for coaches across all British Equestrian Member Bodies
- Recognise the range of CPD to enable coaches to maximise opportunities for informal and non-formal learning opportunities.

Culture: Theme 3

Developing an inclusive coaching culture, where any participant can embark on and progress through the coaching pathway

What does this mean?

We want to create an inclusive culture. This means we want to ensure anyone who wants to coach – whether as a volunteer, paid in a riding school or in a freelance capacity – feels enabled and supported to do so. Openness and inclusivity is spread throughout the entire workforce and there is support for people to access coaching as a career. Our data shows that currently both our participants and coaching workforce is lacking in diversity, and is not reflective of the UK population.

We believe that the barriers to achieving a diverse coaching workforce are:

- The cost, or the perceived cost, of equestrian coaching qualifications
- The perception that there is a need to be an expert in horses and horsemanship before you embark on any equestrian coaching pathway, as opposed to developing and improving knowledge and skills as you progress through a pathway
- A general perception that equestrian sport and working in equestrian sport is not for 'people like me', which narrows the diversity in the coaching workforce and may then impact negatively on the diversity of participants
- A perception outside of our sport that working and coaching in equestrian sport is not a 'proper job'



What will we do?

- Proactive encouragement and support for coaches or potential coaches with disabilities – greater visibility of disabled coaches may encourage others to consider involvement in equestrian coaching
- Encourage those from different backgrounds into coaching greater visibility of coaches from different backgrounds may encourage others to consider involvement in equestrian coaching, dispelling the myth you have to be 'born horsey'
- Remove barriers by making materials more accessible – physically, but also very importantly the words used in documents. We will make no assumptions about coaches' capabilities
- Promote coaching as a career option to riders involved with education programmes such as the Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DISE) and the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE), as well as judges who may be interested in becoming a coach

PROFILE & VALUE

Coaches invest huge amounts of time, effort and money in gaining qualifications and in delivering our sport. In return, we need to ensure we recognise and reward the contributions they make, not only by raising the profile of coaching as a career, but by celebrating the people that take that path and the qualifications they attain.



Profile & Value: Theme 1

Raising the profile of coaching in our sport at all levels, and of the equestrian coaching workforce wherever they work.

What does this mean?

Our coaches are one of the most valuable resources we have. Taking the steps outlined here will raise the profile of coaches working at all levels and with all the different participant groups across our sport, and our aim is to encourage more people to take up coaching as volunteers or as a career. We will also aim to raise the profile of equestrian coaching across the whole sporting landscape, making us into a beacon sport for others to learn from.



What will we do?

- A regular media feature (article, podcast, etc.) focusing on coaches working with a specific participant group
- All Member Bodies will fully engage with National Coaching Week to celebrate the great coaches we have, the breadth of our qualifications, and depth of the CPD our coaches have available
- Encourage all equestrian awards to include coaching in their programmes
- Scope out the options to enable Member Bodies to feed recognised coaches through to external (non-equestrian) coaching awards

Profile & Value: Theme 2

Maximising the value of the qualifications in the equestrian coaching workforce, both to the coach and to the participant

What does this mean?

We believe that ensuring our qualifications are relevant and current will encourage more coaches to further upskill and develop their practice through taking recognised equestrian coaching qualifications.

Mapping our coaching qualifications to meet the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) Professional Standard for Coaches will add value and profile, as well as an extra level of validation to our qualifications. We believe there is more we could do to encourage a greater number of coaches to seek qualifications, without needing to make specific qualifications mandatory.

We will encourage a greater number of coaches to take qualifications and associated CPD, and assist the public in seeking out appropriately qualified coaches. Raising the profile of the qualifications coaches hold will also encourage more coaches to invest in the training and qualifications available.

What will we do?

- Ensure participants can easily identify the relevance of coach qualifications so that they can choose the right coach for them
- Ensure publications and media featuring equestrian coaches give due profile to any equestrian coaching qualification held by the coach
- Ensure coaching awards give due consideration to the importance of a relevant coaching qualification
- Regularly review the content and assessment criteria of coaching qualifications to ensure they are current and fit for purpose

Profile & Value: Theme 3

Understanding the scale of the impact that coaching has on our sport

What does this mean?

Taking action on this theme will help us as organisations to ensure our support to coaches is at the cutting edge of where coaching, and the equestrian industry as a whole, is going. This in turn will help us to deliver an ever-improving service to participants through a developing coaching workforce. It will also provide the data and the insight to demonstrate the impact of our coaching and our coaches, unlocking new opportunities, partnerships and resources, and raising the profile of equestrian sport.



What will we do?

- Establish a plan for the coaching insight we need for each year
- Use British Equestrian Level 4 Coaching Certificate research, along with MSc and Professional Doctorate research, to ensure this strategy considers current insight and informs best practice within our coaching workforce
- Understand the current picture of the coaching workforce. Obtain opinions from coaches on subjects of relevance, such as CPD requirements and current coaching knowledge. This will be used to inform the current training and qualifications on offer from British Equestrian and its Member Bodies
- Utilise coaching insight from outside equestrianism within other sports. This insight will be considered within the context of the coaching strategy to improve our qualifications, and the service and support we provide to coaches.

CLARITY

With such breadth and depth to the diverse range of opportunities to participate and grow through equestrian sport, and the array of organisations that form our federation, it is often easy for messages to become confused and varied from organisation to organisation. All Member Bodies in our federation play a unique and vital role, so we must work collectively to harness the great potential we have in order to provide an outstanding service to our coaching workforce through providing clear and consistent support.

Clarity: Theme 1

Provide a clear and simple explanation of pathways into and through coach development

What does this mean?

One of the aspects that makes our sport different from many others is that much of our coaching workforce is paid, rather than working in a voluntary capacity. This is important because we need to frame our coaching pathways in the context of a genuine career pathway and promote them as such. However, we also need to reflect the great number of volunteer coaches who continue to provide an excellent experience for participants, so we need to be providing a professional service to coaches whether they are volunteers or professional, aspiring or active.

What will we do?

- Produce and publish an impartial 'frequently asked questions' guidance document to help coaches, coach developers, mentors, tutors and assessors to navigate the different coaching pathways and decide which one is most suitable for them
- Provide consistent guidance about transitions between the pathways
- Map CPD opportunities across the federation and provide a shared calendar of learning opportunities
- Understand what the coaching workforce needs in their individual career pathway regarding CPD and qualifications



Clarity: Theme 2

Establish collaborative working practices to ensure coaches receive clear guidance and support throughout their journey

What does this mean?

When we talk about collaborative working practices, we are referring to identifying areas where there is commonality between Member Bodies, finding a common way of working to provide a common level of service to coaches. In some situations, this may result in sharing some of the work and even unifying some of the systems, but it does not mean a single centralised approach and pathway. The great benefit of having such a broad range of organisations and pathway options available to coaches in our sport is the choice that offers. It is about how we as organisations are able to work more effectively together to provide the best support we can collectively for coaches.



What will we do?

- Ensure CDAT becomes the primary forum for debate and discussion, challenge, clarification and collective strategic decision making around equestrian coaching
- Improve recognition of, and access to, CPD opportunities across Member Bodies
- Ensure opportunities for cross-Member Body working is supported
- Establish common organisational systems, language and practices to support coaches across Member Bodies
- Share best practice, learning and opportunities

Clarity: Theme 3

Communicate clear messages to coaches and to the participating public

What does this mean?

Clarity and consistency across Member Bodies is key to this theme, so we will work to agree and implement common language for communications regarding coaching and coaches. If we are consistent in the language we use, it would follow that the language we see and hear in the media will become aligned to our collective norm – this can only be positive in encouraging more people to engage in our sport, find a good coach with appropriate qualifications, and to pursue an equestrian coaching career.



What will we do?

- Content and information on key issues will be prepared and compiled centrally for distribution across the Member Bodies and wider equestrian community
- Produce a glossary of terms and a crib sheet on coaches and their riders to guide journalists and communications colleagues when publishing articles and press releases related to coaches and coaching
- Adopting common terminology for internal and external communications
- Establish clear pre-requisites and routes into and through all equestrian coaching qualification types

Monitoring and reviewing

This strategy is owned by the members of the Coaching Development Action Team (CDAT) and will be monitored and reviewed by that forum. CDAT will set and agree a work plan for the year at the start of each year, with identified priorities from the strategy. CDAT will review progress on the work plan at each of the meetings throughout the year, while the impact on coaches will be assessed through the annual British Equestrian Coaches Survey.



In conclusion

We believe that by delivering the commitments laid out in this strategy, we will achieve significant change for equestrian coaching across all our participant groups. Our coaching culture will become more person-focused and more inclusive, we will have greater diversity in our coaching workforce, and our CPD and lifelong learning will better fit the needs of the workforce. We will have clarity in our messaging to coaches and the participating public, and by collaborating more effectively across the federation we will provide a smoother service to our coaching workforce. By regularly reviewing our qualifications and improving our coaching insight and research, we will ensure our offering remains fit for purpose, current and relevant to the changing equestrian coaching industry. In raising the profile of coaching in our sport, our coaches themselves and our qualifications, we will create a community that encourages more coaches to take qualifications and engage in lifelong learning through the federation family.

This strategy is not a panacea, but it represents a significant step in the drive to improve what we do for our coaches and what our coaches do for their participants. Ultimately, we believe that delivering this strategy will help more participants join us, enjoy better coaching experiences, and develop a lifelong love of horses and participation in equestrian sport.



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