

# The ITF recognition of coaches education systems of National Associations

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## ABSTRACT

*This article presents one of the key projects of the ITF Coaches Education Programme: The ITF recognition of coaches education systems of National Associations (NAs). The goal of this project is to ensure all NAs are operating at the required standards in their coaches' education systems, as recognised by the ITF. The general guidelines for the recognition process as well as the specific features of each criteria are outlined and explained.*

**Key words:** coach education, competencies, recognition

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## INTRODUCTION

The ITF recognition of coaches education systems of National Associations recognises and approves coach education systems under the control of respective national tennis federations. ITF recognition is based on criteria and minimum standards for coaches' education as agreed by the ITF Coaches Commission (ITF, 2007).

The ultimate goal of the initiative is to globally assess and recognise nations at one of the three levels of the approval scheme; Gold, Silver and Bronze. Nations that are self-sufficient with basic criteria, up to the equivalent of the Level 1 ITF syllabi, will be awarded Level 1/ Bronze approval. A country with the criteria in place up to the equivalent of the ITF level 2 syllabi, will be awarded Level 2/ Silver approval. For nations demonstrating the highest levels in coach education, player development, officiating and sport science, these will be awarded the highest Level 3/ Gold approval. The overall objective of the Coach Education recognition scheme is ensuring that the coach education being performed in our member nations is at least meeting minimum standards necessary to protect and grow our sport as well as motivating and helping nations to become self sufficient in coach education.

## CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION OF A COACH EDUCATION SYSTEM

A coach education system (offered by NAs) is comprised of a variety of components at a number of levels. Each level offers progression for a coach and reflects best practice and current educational needs.

The ITF Coaches Commission approved the following criteria for recognition.

**1. Have and run a Coaches Education Department inside the structure of the NA and have a Coaches and / or a Coaching – Sport Science Commission.** The role of a Coaches Education Department within the structure of the NA is a fundamental part of an ITF endorsed coach education system. There should be a clear vision and position within the overall structure of the NA. The existence of a group of experts in coaching, coach education and sport science that give advice to the CE Department in CE matters is of great importance to produce high-quality resources and courses.

**2. Have a Coaches Education Director together with a periodically trained staff that will include course and / or sport science tutors for the courses.** The NA should have qualified technical and administrative personnel and should have programme(s) of training for the personnel responsible for delivering, assessing and assuring the competence of coaches (tutors and evaluators).

**3. Have a competency based coaches' education programme/ structure.** The NA should award qualification(s) that fulfill an awarding function and should be responsible for ensuring the quality of the qualification over time. Coaches' education structure and format may be presented in a variety of forms, however, there are principles of good

practice regarding the intent, content and assessment of CE structures that will enhance quality coaching education. The CE system should show the complete CE system details from: number of levels, course load, format, syllabus, learning options, entry requirements, testing procedures, number of candidates, number of tutors, titles awarded, certification and quality control etc.



## Coach education courses

**a) Course Structure:** Intensive: The course is delivered in a number of consecutive days / weeks (e.g. 10 consecutive days). Distributed: The course is delivered over a period of time (weeks / months) with breaks in between (e.g. 1 day a week / month, 1 week a month, 1 weekend a month). The distributed format is recommended since it allows the candidates to better assimilate the contents throughout the course.

**b) Course schedule:** The ITF recommendations are the following: No more than 2 consecutive hours on-court are recommended without a break. No more than 1 consecutive hour in the lecture room is recommended without a break. No more than 5-6 consecutive full course days (8 hours / day) without a day off are also recommended. No more than 7-8 hours a day are recommended.

**c) Course content delivery:** It can be: Unitary: The contents of the course are delivered by the same tutors / organisation (e.g. the Federation). Combined: The contents of the course are delivered by different tutors / organisations (e.g. the "tennis-specific" contents can be delivered by the Federation tutors whereas the "general-sport science" contents are delivered by tutors from Universities, etc.). The ITF recommendation is that the combined format is recommended since it allows the candidates to be exposed to more tutors with expertise in different sport science fields. The position of a head-tutor or course co-ordinator is highly recommended.

### Course delivery formats:

**a) Tutor-contact:** The course is delivered 100% by the tutor-contact procedure.

**b) Combined:** The course includes different delivery options apart from tutor contact, which include: *Pre-course study:* This can be done through distance learning (e-learning) modules, mentorship or other procedures. *During course practices / study:* This can be done through internships, task assignment, etc. *Post-course practice / assignment:* This can be done using the same procedures as above.

The ITF recommendation is that the combined format is recommended since it allows the candidates to perform a variety of tasks prior, during or after the course which will hopefully help them to more effectively acquire their competencies.

**The on-court / lecture room course ratio:** The ITF recommends an on-court to lecture room ratio of 60: 40. This is recommended in all courses to ensure a predominance of the practical component of the course. A 50:50 balance is the minimum ratio accepted for on-court content.

**Use of students for the course:** The ITF recommends that the use of students relating to the appropriate level for each course is strongly put in place to ensure candidates practice and are examined in ecologically valid conditions. Candidates bringing their own players to the course / assessments is also an option.

**Course loads:** ITF recommendation is that for certification courses, the following loads can be used as minimal guidelines: For all three respective levels- a coach of beginner/intermediate players, a coach of advanced players and a coach of high performance players: a minimum of 80-100 tutor contact hours are recommended (60 on-court and 40 lecture room approx.). The ITF recommends that the number of hours across courses should be equal. High quality coaching at each level is essential; therefore the associated courses at each level should carry equal load.

**4. Have a calendar / schedule, and run on a regular basis, a series of activities, courses, seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. for the coaches and other tennis professionals in the country.** This shows the ongoing activity of the CE system and is a clear indicator of proficiency towards the ITF endorsement of the coach education system of the NA.

**5. Have a coach licensing programme by which licensed coaches will have an annual professional license (coach card) to be allowed to coach tennis in the country.** The existence of a coach licensing scheme / programme that makes it mandatory for coaches to hold a valid and official coaching license is a fundamental part of an ITF endorsed coach education system. Licensed coaches should be provided with an annual professional coaching license (coach card) to be allowed to coach tennis in the country and attend continuous professional development events. The license may offer, among others, the following benefits: Possibility to coach, medical insurance, general insurance, legal assistance, clothing or racquet contracts, discount in coaching material and other benefits.

The procedure of license renewal can offer the following options: 1) Evidence of coaching activity: The coach has to show evidence that he is active in coaching. 2) Payment of professional coaching license fee. 3) Participation in the Professional Development Programme (PDP): The coach needs to take part in a certain number of continuous education activities (e.g. Refresher courses, conferences, tournaments, workshops, etc.), during a given period (e.g. 1-2 years) in order to renew the coaching license.

**6. Create or use a series of coaches' education resources (books, videos, DVDs, internet, etc. in their national language).** Generic and technical learning resources should be available to candidates throughout courses. Such resources need not all be produced by the

NA, but the NA does have a responsibility to ensure that sufficient resources are accessible. Such resources should also include those that are likely to be produced by the NA, such as workbooks, learner guides, candidate packs and tutor/assessor guidance. Learning resources for each unit may include tennis-specific coaching manuals, sport science books, handbooks, seasonal and annual plans, technical websites and online learning tools. Other resources for the CE system may include brochures, marketing materials, etc.



**7. Have a Continuous Education Professional Development Programme.** A programme of continuous professional development/licensing and re-accreditation should be available for coaches to maintain their status as tennis coaches at their respective level.

**8. Other relevant characteristics of the system.** The CE Department may not be limited to conducting coaching courses. Other activities may be included in its brief. The CE system should show compliance with National Regulations including Financial Management Procedures and Systems Insurance Cover (Public Liability and Professional Indemnity), Codes of Conduct, Anti-Doping Policy, Anti-Discrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity, Racial Vilification and Disability Discrimination, Copyright, Privacy, Working with Children, Workplace Harassment / Bullying / Victimisation, and Workplace Health and Safety. In addition, the CE system should show compliance with NOC and IOC regulations including Codes of Conduct, Anti-Doping Policy, etc. Finally, the CE system should show compliance with ITF regulations including Fees, Codes of Conduct, Anti-Doping Policy, etc.

The NA CE system may approve other organisations (known as training providers, approved centres or delivery agencies) to provide CE courses. This is acceptable provided the NA fulfils the quality-assurance role. The NA should ensure that the programme and/or qualification are delivered via appropriate criteria. They should ensure that candidates receive the correct programme of training and assessment and the best opportunities, within their capabilities.

### GUIDELINES

The ITF has created a document which outlines in detail the guidelines required by coach education systems of National Associations (NA) in order to obtain International Tennis Federation (ITF) recognition (ITF, 2008).

It is important NAs applicants provide sufficient, valid, current, reliable and authentic evidence against each of the criteria listed within the Guidelines. The Guidelines contain specifically designed assessment tools for ITF assessors, which will assist them to make an appropriate decision as to the success, or otherwise, of NA applicants. These assessment tools are readily available within the Guidelines, which will allow applicants to conduct a self-assessment prior to submitting their

application. An ITF assessor will then visit the nation to conduct the assessment.

#### SITUATION OF THE PROJECT

The project started in 2009 with two nations: Australia and Spain, which have already had their CE systems recognised by the ITF. The following Federations have accepted to take part in the programme in 2011: Canada, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Germany, France and Austria.

The objective is that all 10 nations above are approved by the end of 2011 and then the ITF will continue the project including a group of

countries (approximately 20) in 2012. Subsequently, the approval will be opened to all nations with the flexibility to approve systems at Bronze (self sufficient at level one) and Silver (self sufficient at level 2) from 2013 onwards.

#### REFERENCES

ITF (2007). Minutes of the ITF Coaches Commission meeting. Unpublished document.

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