



# **A MODEL PROCESS FOR ACCREDITING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACHING**

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SPORT, PHYSICAL EDUCATION  
& ACTIVITY RESEARCH



# **A MODEL PROCESS FOR ACCREDITING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACHING**

Commissioned from: Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR)  
Canterbury Christ Church University

Commissioned by: UK Sport

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## FOREWORD FROM UK SPORT

In addition to its work in high performance sport and major events, UK Sport works in partnership with national sporting bodies, international federations, governments and non-governmental organisations to support sport development initiatives in over 30 countries around the world. We also advocate for wider access to inclusive, high quality sport and physical education worldwide.

In our international work one of the most successful interventions is sport workforce development, specifically supporting and developing coach education systems. In doing this work we have seen that, to a large extent, coaches in both developed and developing nations prefer to learn non-formally and informally - but that there are no systems of recognising, validating and accrediting such learning.

It was against this background that we commissioned the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) at Canterbury Christ Church University to review the literature that exists - internationally and across sectors – about informal and non-formal learning, and to consult with some of our partner governing bodies in the UK about their own practice or future plans in this respect. As a result of their investigations, SPEAR has developed a six-stage model process that the team proposes could be used to accredit the informal and non-formal learning of coaches seeking coaching qualifications. We at UK Sport have endorsed the model and believe it is capable of making a valuable contribution not only in an international context but domestically as well.

We are publishing the model openly and without restrictions because we would like to see organisations for whom it might be relevant embracing and using it. In addition, the full report of the research that underpins the model is also openly available<sup>1</sup>. While we recognise it is unlikely that anyone will want to implement the model in its entirety, we hope that organisations will adopt it where they can but at the same time adapt it to meet their needs. Internationally, we will be looking to promote the model with a range of partners, taking into account local circumstances and thinking about the potential scenarios that SPEAR has identified for this purpose. At home, several governing bodies have already expressed an interest in piloting the model and we are currently looking to see how best we can support them in this regard.

Our thanks are due to SPEAR for having embraced a tricky brief with enthusiasm and imagination, and to all those governing body staff who contributed their time and expertise so generously to the consultation phase.

Jerry Bingham  
Research Manager  
UK Sport  
January 2016

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<sup>1</sup> See [\[UK Sport web address for FULL REPORT to be added here\]](#)

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## A MODEL PROCESS FOR ACCREDITING INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN SPORT COACHING

In November 2014, UK Sport commissioned the Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR) at Canterbury Christ Church University to undertake research to explore how informal and non-formal learning might be validated and accredited in sport coaching. In doing so, SPEAR has explored:

- the scope of informal and non-formal learning in Europe and the UK in a wide range of sectors including sport;
- systems for validating and accrediting informal and non-formal learning;
- the implementation of systems to validate and accredit informal and non-formal learning in sport coaching.

The main outcome of this research, *A Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching* (see Figure A1), is presented here, together with a short discussion of relevant potential scenarios that highlight specific considerations for implementing this model process in the international context. The full report of the research is available at: [\[UK Sport web address for FULL REPORT to be added here\]](#).

The model process is intended to be used to accredit the informal and non-formal learning of candidates seeking coaching qualifications. The process recognises that candidates may be seeking accreditation for prior informal and non-formal learning, and/or to plan for accreditation of future informal and non-formal learning. In the case of prior learning, the learning period will largely, if not entirely, have been completed before the accreditation process begins. Prior learning might be that which has been certificated (such as attendance at a workshop), or that which has been acquired through experience, or may be a combination of the two. In the case of future learning, the learning period is embedded within the accreditation process, and is proactively planned at the start of the process.

Whilst the processes of accrediting prior and future informal and non-formal learning can be used independently, the processes are compatible and can be used simultaneously, or in conjunction with accreditation of more formal learning. For example, a candidate may seek accreditation for prior informal and non-formal learning that partially fulfils the requirements for a qualification, and plan to achieve accreditation for the remaining requirements through future learning, some of which may be informal and non-formal and some of which may be formal.

The process summarised in Figure A1 comprises six stages of no pre-defined time-scale. The stages are common to both accrediting prior learning and planning for the accreditation of future learning, although the activities that take place at each stage may differ.

The first stage concerns raising awareness among potential candidates that a process for accrediting informal and non-formal learning exists, and the provision of information and guidance about how candidates may use the process for either prior or future learning, or both.

For prior learning, candidates will use stage two, the pre-assessment stage, to collect, collate and prepare the evidence of their informal and non-formal learning for submission for assessment. This should be a supported stage in the process in which candidates are provided with further guidance regarding:

- the types of activities that they may have engaged with that may have supported learning;
- the ways in which they can evidence learning;
- the best ways to present evidence of their learning.

In stage three, the assessment stage, the evidence submitted by candidates is assessed, and any further assessment required (such as practical observation) is undertaken. Stage four provides feedback to candidates regarding the credit that can be given, or the award that can be made, for prior learning.

For future learning, candidates plan how they can achieve the learning outcomes required for accreditation through informal and non-formal learning at the pre-assessment stage (stage two). Such future informal and non-formal learning may be planned to take place alongside more formal learning opportunities, or candidates may plan for accreditation on the basis of informal or non-formal learning alone. Stage two should be a supported stage, in which guidance is provided regarding the most suitable methods and activities to achieve learning outcomes, and how to document and evidence learning. The learning period itself then takes place across stages three and four, and involves a continuous cycle of assessment and feedback throughout the learning period, rather than being a single final assessment point with subsequent feedback on outcomes.

At the end of both the prior and future learning processes, the awarding of credit (stage 5) and the appeals process (stage 6) should be applied in the same way.

Details and examples of the activities and evidence that might be required at each stage of the process are provided in Figure A2.

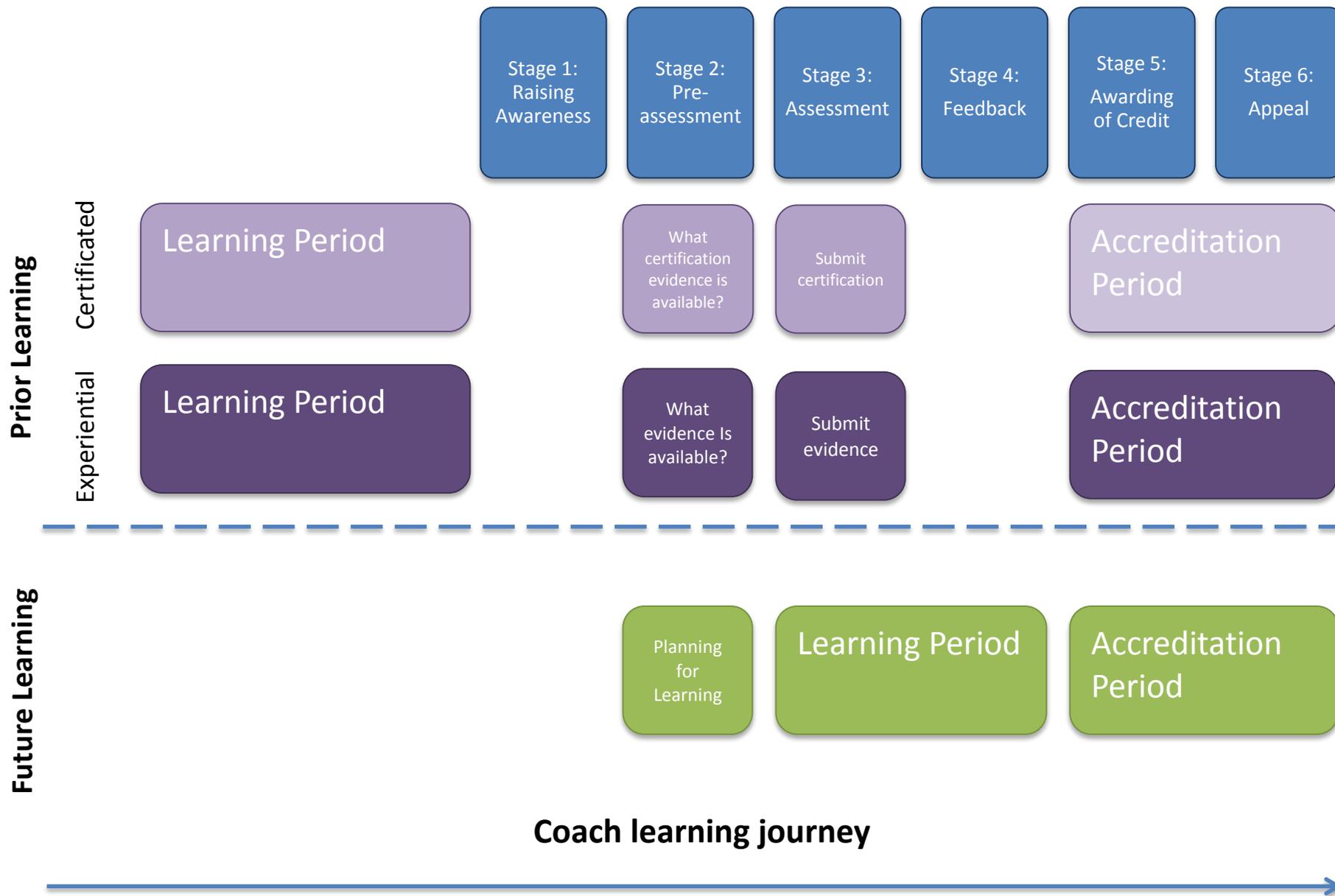


FIGURE A1: A Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching

Stage 1:  
Raising  
Awareness

Raising awareness includes providing information to candidates about the processes associated with how their informal and non-formal learning can be accredited. Sufficient guidance at this stage should allow candidates to decide if they have sufficient prior learning for accreditation, or if they should plan for accreditation of future informal and non-formal, or formal, learning.

**Information provided to the candidate may include:**

- What it means to have their informal and non-formal learning accredited.
- The differences between having prior learning and future learning accredited.
- The stages of the process and associated timelines for each activity.
- The likely costs of the process.
- What support will be available to the learner throughout the process.
- The scope of learning activities that may be considered for learning to be accredited.
- The types of evidence that can support the learning achieved.

**Options for dissemination of this information include:**

- Website information.
- Inclusion in course materials.
- Specific marketing materials.
- Hosting information sessions.

**PRIOR LEARNING:** Support for candidates wishing to have their prior learning accredited at this stage may include guidance towards self-assessment of the learning they have already achieved.

**Options for this assessment include;**

- One to one guidance (in person, via email or phone).
- Providing self-assessment documentation.
- Providing a self-assessment tool.
- Providing a self-assessment workshop/module.

**FUTURE LEARNING:** For candidates that do not wish to have prior learning assessed at this stage, guidance should be directed at how future informal and non-formal learning could be used to meet the requirements of their qualifications.

**FIGURE A2: Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching**

Stage 2:  
Pre-  
assessment

**PRIOR LEARNING:** During the pre-assessment phase candidates will be putting together evidence of their learning.

Guidance throughout this stage should include:

- The stages of the process and the timeline for each activity.
- The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the process.
- The evidence that can be used to support learning.
- How to present the evidence.

**FUTURE LEARNING:** During the pre-assessment phase candidates will be planning how they might utilise informal and non-formal learning opportunities to meet the requirements of their qualification. Guidance at this stage should include:

- What types of activities might be undertaken.
- What type of evidence might be accumulated to document learning.
- How to present that evidence.

**Options for providing this guidance include;**

- Face to face meetings.
- Web based interaction (email, skype, virtual learning platform).
- Self-assessment documentation.
- Delivered module/workshop.

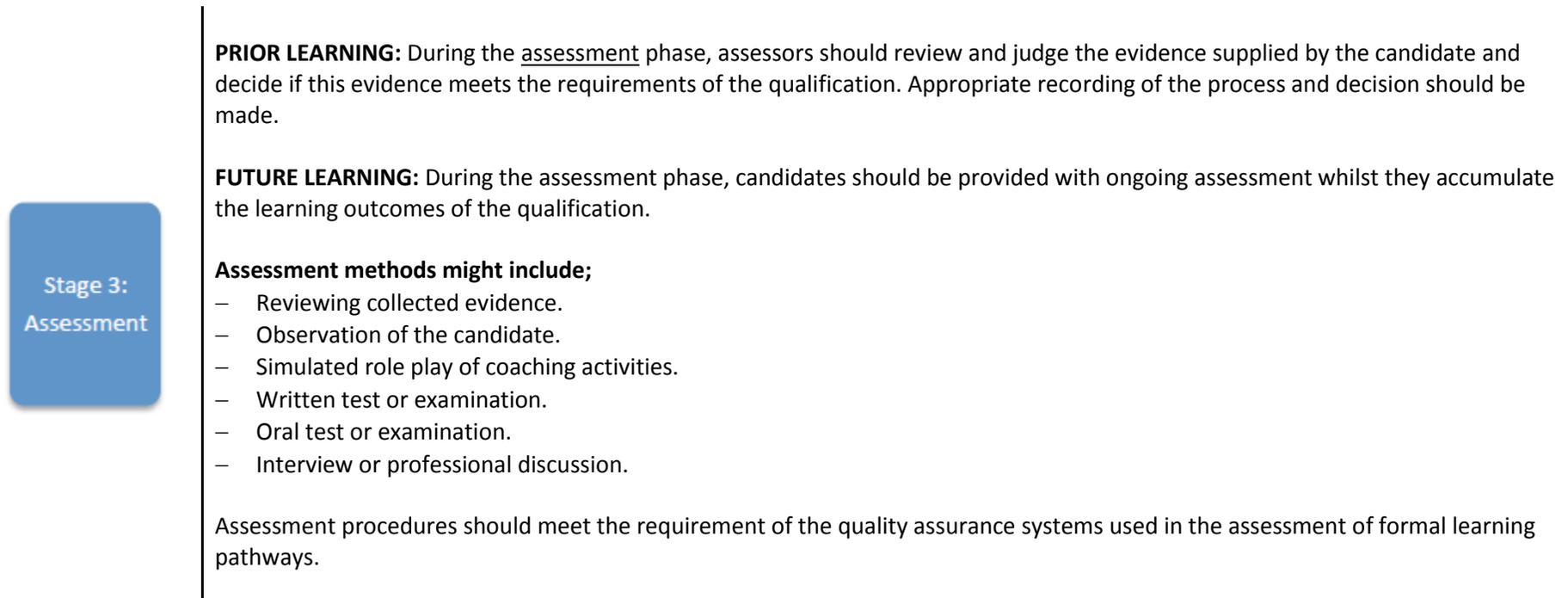
**Example activities**

- Observing a coach/coaching sessions.
- Professional discussion with a coach/coaches.
- Planning coaching sessions.
- Delivering coaching sessions.
- Evaluating coaching sessions.
- Attending non-formal coaching workshops/seminars.
- Reading coaching (or other related) materials (websites, journal articles).
- Engaging in coaching networks.

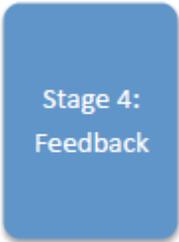
**Example Evidence**

- Letters of recommendation & 3<sup>rd</sup> party testimony.
- Session plans and other session planning documents.
- Certification of attendance/other awards.
- Reflective accounts.
- Needs analysis documents.
- Procedures/policy documents written by the candidate.
- Videos of coaching sessions.
- Recordings of conversations.
- Risk assessments conducted.
- References/Performance appraisals.
- Evaluation forms.
- CV.

**FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching**



**FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching**



Stage 4:  
Feedback

**PRIOR LEARNING:** Feedback as to the results of the assessment should be provided to the learner. The decision whether or not any of the prior learning identified by the candidate can be accredited should be communicated.

**Options for disseminating feedback include;**

- Written statement of the results of the assessment.
- Face to face discussion.
- Web based communication; (email, skype, virtual learning environment).

For unsuccessful learners, guidance should be provided as to how they can engage with other learning opportunities, and how they can evidence these for future accreditation.

**FUTURE LEARNING:** For learners who are receiving ongoing assessment and feedback, this will be a continual process as they meet the learning outcomes for the qualification. Feedback should include planning with the candidate how they can continue to meet learning outcomes, and where they have been unsuccessful what they need to do to improve. If candidates provide all of this work for assessment in one single submission (which would not be good practice), the feedback guidelines as above apply.

**FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching**

Stage 5:  
Awarding of  
Credit

**PRIOR LEARNING & FUTURE LEARNING:** Awarding credit should be conducted in the same way as for formal learning processes, which will vary between awarding bodies. The learning outcomes/units accredited should be documented in the same way as formal learning processes.

Stage 6:  
Appeal

**PRIOR LEARNING & FUTURE LEARNING:** Should a candidate wish to appeal a decision, there should be sufficient guidance provided to enable this. This should be in accordance with appeals procedures applied to formal learning, and guidance may include:

- Information on the appeals process.
- A designated point of contact.
- Grounds for appeal.

**FIGURE A2 (cont.): Stages in the Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Sport Coaching**

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

One of the key priorities for this research was to develop a set of principles or a process that would be flexible enough to be used in an international context. In this respect, the *Model Process for Accrediting Informal and Non-Formal Learning in Sport Coaching* has been developed to be flexible and to enable use across a range of contexts, including international development. In using the model process in this context there are additional considerations dependent upon who is offering, managing and delivering the qualification and model process. Outlined below are three potential scenarios that might occur in this context and questions that will impact upon the model process.

- (1) That a sport governing body, either sport specific or generic, in the country concerned offers the qualification, manages and delivers the process.
- (2) That a sport national governing body (NGB) in the UK (or other country), or international body such as the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) or UNESCO offers and manages the qualification but this is delivered by a local governing body/federation.
- (3) That a sport national governing body (NGB) in the UK (or other country), or international body such as the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE) or UNESCO offers, manages and delivers the qualification.

Across each of these three scenarios, a range of further questions relating to delivery assessment, workforce and workforce training, and quality assurance need to be considered (this list is not exhaustive):

- *Where will the stages of the process be delivered?*  
While it is highly likely that the learning period will take place in the country concerned, it is possible that the pre-assessment stage, which should be supported by advice and guidance, may take place in the country offering the qualification, or at an international coaching workshop or symposium. Other stages may also take place outside the country concerned; for example, for future informal and non-formal learning, the assessment and feedback loop may be delivered at meetings or workshops.
- *What evidence will be available for assessment?*  
In countries where formal sport development structures are less developed, some forms of evidence offered as examples in Figure A2 in section A may not be available. For example, certificates of attendance at training activities may not have been provided, or organisations or individuals may not be in place to provide references, performance appraisals or letters of recommendation.
- *Who will provide and train the workforce of mentors and assessors?*  
This is a particularly salient question if the process is delivered in the country concerned but is not managed by a sport governing body indigenous to that country. If systems of mentorship and assessment are delivered from the UK (or other country where an accrediting body may be based), considerations arise regarding communication channels and whether there is a need for face-to-face visits or guidance. This may also be true if an international body is managing the process.

- *How will quality assurance take place, and who will be responsible for it?*  
A further workforce of quality assurance professionals will be required and, regardless of who is managing the process, delivering quality assurance systems in the international development context will be challenging.

The potential implications of the questions above for each of the three scenarios suggested are outlined for each of the stages of the model process in Figure B. We hope this will be helpful to sport governing bodies and international stakeholders in considering the use of the model beyond the UK.

**FIGURE B: Considerations for the International Context**

**Stage 1:  
Raising  
Awareness**

**Stage 2: Pre-  
assessment**

**Stage 3:  
Assessment**

**Stage 4:  
Feedback**

**Stage 5:  
Awarding of  
Credit**

**Stage 6:  
Appeal**

Scenario 1: Local Sport Governing Body offers the qualification and manages the process

This stage is likely to be largely localised. The local context will determine relevant opportunities. Opportunities may also exist at international events.

Where guidance to candidates is delivered locally, the workforce may require training. Accessibility for different types of support structures, e.g internet, face to face should be established.

The assessor workforce may require training to support the assessment process. Appropriate assessment mechanisms for informal and non-formal learning should be developed and used.

Mechansims to provide feedback to learners should be established. This may occur when all evidence is submitted or may form part of an ongoing process. Mechanisms for each form should be considered.

The awarding of credit for informal and non-formal learning should be conducted in the same way as formal learning.

Appeal procedures should concur with those for formal learning. These should be recorded and procedures readily available for learners.

Scenario 2: A UK NGB or international organisation (IO) offers the qualification and delegates' delivery to a local governing body

Communication between the NGB's/IO's and local governing body is required to determine the delivery strategy. The language and transport of physical material should be considered.

The local workforce may require training as to the appropriate forms of evidence and how to offer sufficient guidance to learners.

The assessor workforce may require training to support the assessment process.

The local workforce may require training in the provision of formative and summative feedback. Where delivery is localised, the responsibility and mechanisms for quality assurance should be established.

Where the awarding body is like to be remote, procedures for the awarding of credit should be established between the NGB's'/IO's and the local governing body.

Communication between NGB's/IO's and the local governing body is required to determine the process for, and action appeals.

Scenario 3: A UK NGB or International organisation (IO) offers the qualification and this is managed and delivered by this NGB or IO

Workforce providing information may determine the opportunities.

remote support should be established.

submitted needs to be considered.

developed and utilised.

Established.

considered.