

Meeting the needs of coaches and athletes, now and in the future: The new five-level IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System

Introduction

As a major component of the IAAF Development Programme, the IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System (CECS) assists those Member Federations that do not possess major resources with their core tasks of developing a coaching structure and preparing coaches to support athletes as they move along their development pathway.

Approaching its Centenary in 2012, the IAAF, in accordance with the vision set out in the *Athletics World Plan*, has strengthened its commitment to improving the services offered by coaches of athletics, particularly to children and young athletes. Updating the CECS, which has been in operation since 1991, is a key element of the strategy to achieve this goal.

In March 2007, the IAAF Development Commission approved a new five-level structure for the CECS (Figure1) designed to meet the following aims:

- Combine the traditional implementation of the CECS with the existing operations of IAAF Kids' Athletics, IAAF Youth Athletics and the IAAF Academy into an integrated system.
- Develop the competence of coaches to implement the IAAF Kids' Athletics programme of training and competition and be able to 'hand-hold' children through the transition to the 'real athletics' in their youth years of 13-15.

- Create a clear 'Coach Development Pathway' that mirrors and supports the 'Athlete Development Pathway', is more attainable and realistic at the entry levels and is more challenging and specific at the advanced levels. Coaches should progress along the pathway at an individual rate and develop according to their personal potential.
- Provide a programme that is competence-focussed, rather than knowledge-based, with updated educational materials incorporating the latest practical and technical information with flexible, interactive delivery media making it future-proofed.

A report on the preparations leading to the Commission's approval of the new structure was published in NSA issue 3/2006. Since then, work has continued to refine the structure and develop the contents and other elements of the system. The aim of this report is to document the progress over the last year and give the latest information on the CECS structure and its implementation.

The CECS – A short history

Before we examine the new CECS in depth, it is appropriate to provide some background information by reviewing the history of the system:

Following the creation of the IAAF Development Department in 1987, a detailed analysis of the sport was conducted and published, together with a development strategy, in the

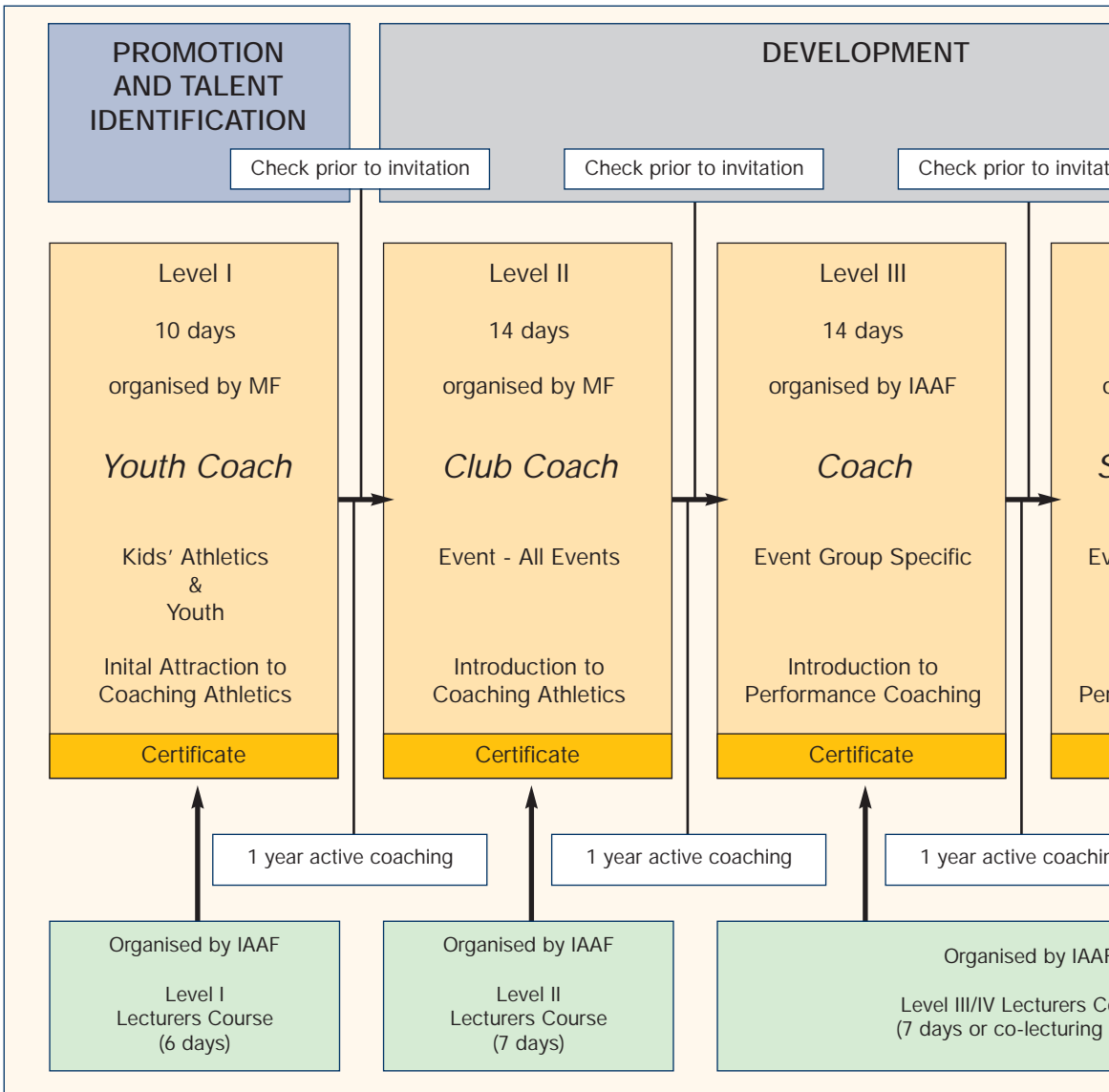
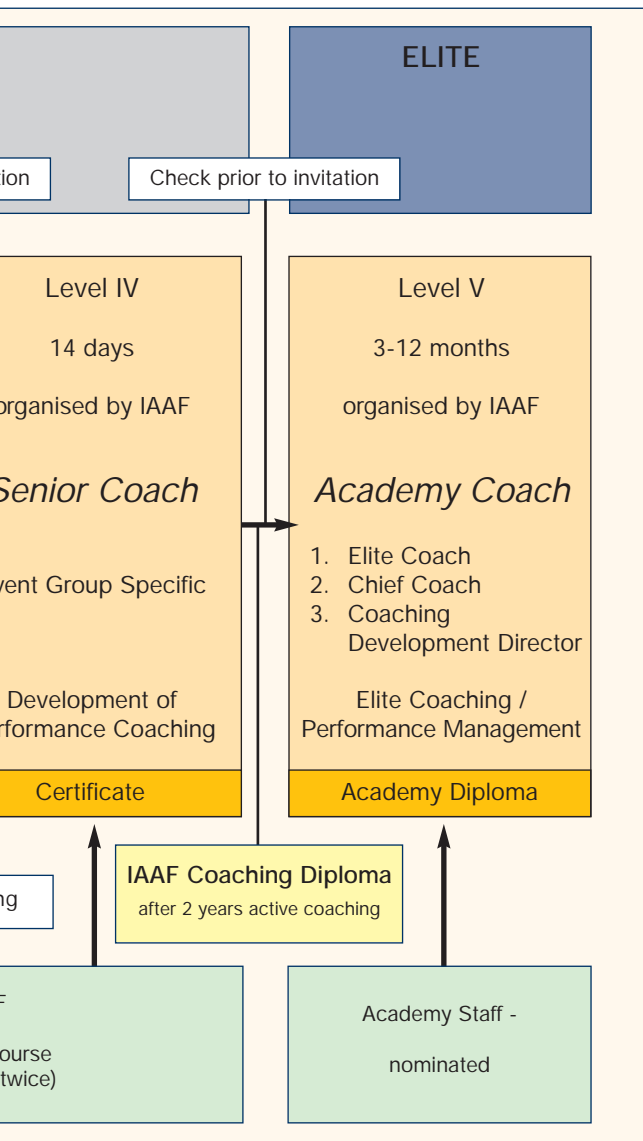


Figure 1: Structure of the IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System

1991 booklet entitled *IAAF Development Cooperation*, which remains an important guideline for the development programme.

IAAF Development Cooperation identified seven areas contributing to the overall lack of sufficient development of athletics. Of these, the lack of qualified coaches, has always been a priority issue in a sport where much of the development of activity, at the grass roots in

particular, is coach-driven or coach-led. A country without sufficient professionally trained and experienced coaches cannot be expected to systematically develop its available athletic talent. In addition, because of the important role they often play in promoting an appreciation of the sport among both athletes and non-athletes, a lack of good coaches can have a negative effect on the development of an athletics culture.



point by offering three levels of standardised education and training to those Member Federations that did not have their own qualified lecturers, curricula or supporting educational materials. One of the key aims was for course participants in any country to be assured that the quality of their training was equivalent to that provided on any other course in the system. In fact, the CECS was the first worldwide coaches education programme in any sport to provide a standardised curriculum, course materials, lecturer training and evaluation procedures in seven languages.

CECS courses were designed to prepare coaches to work on the defined level, regardless of whether they attended further courses. The first course was staged in 1991 after a careful design and testing process involving more than 60 experts in the fields of sport development, coaching and curriculum design. Since then, more than 10,000 coaches have been qualified at Level I and 1,500 at Level II. Successful completion of the CECS Level II, coupled with proof of ongoing, active coaching, leads to the award of the IAAF Diploma in Coaching, granted with the authority of the world governing body for Athletics. In recent years, more than 200 coaches have progressed even further by completing the courses for Level III, the IAAF Academy.

There are currently 235 trained Level I Lecturers in more than 130 countries. Utilising at least one indigenous lecturer on each course, this work force supports, on average, 40 Level I courses per year. In recent years, there has also been an average of 16 Level II courses and 12 Academy courses per year.

From this strategic identification of need, and as a key project in its Decade of Development (1990-2000) declared by the then President, Primo Nebiolo, the IAAF opened a new era in the training of coaches by creating and operating a worldwide coaches' education and certification system.

The CECS was meant to address the weaknesses of the ad hoc courses used up to that

The IAAF Development Department, which was renamed the Member Services Department (MSD) in 2001, coordinates the delivery of courses through a global network of nine Regional Development Centres (RDCs). The MSD creates and supplies educational materials, maintains an accurate database of coaches and supervises the ongoing development of IAAF Lecturers.

Table 1: The five-Level IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System

Level	Level I	Level II	Level III
Title	Youth Coach	Club Coach	Coach
Duration	10-day Course	14-day Course	14-day Course
Objective	To develop the skills to organise Kids' Athletics: preparation & competition + orientation to athletics for 13-15 year-olds	To provide an opportunity to begin the Coaching Pathway	To develop intermediate coaching skills and knowledge
Target Group	Teachers and Talent Scouts	Teachers and Coaches	Coaches
Entry Requirements	Minimum of 18 years of age, interest in athletics	Minimum of 21 years of age, interest in athletics	Successful completion of Level II and one year of active coaching certified by MF
Qualification	Certificate of attendance	IAAF CECS Level II Certificate	IAAF CECS Level III Certificate
Funding	Local	IAAF, Olympic Solidarity and National	IAAF, Olympic Solidarity
Participants' competence after the course	To stage Kids' Athletics and to prepare and motivate these youth (13-15 years) to continue with athletics	To implement appropriate athletics programmes to youth and novice athletes	To coach a selected event group to beginner and developing athletes
Activity Area	Schools, Clubs, Member Federation, Ministry of Education	PE classes in schools, basic training in clubs	Athletics institutions (e.g. clubs), Member Federation
Invitation	by Member Federation, Schools, Clubs	Recommendation by Member Federation	by IAAF, recommended by MFs
Equivalency	None	On request to IAAF and approval	On request to IAAF and approval
Lecturer Education	CECS Level I Lecturer Organised by IAAF	CECS Level II Lecturer Organised by IAAF	CECS Level III/IV Lecturer Course Organised by IAAF
Education choices	None – covers Kids' Athletics and Youth athletics	None – covers all events	From six Event Groups

The long-term goals of the original CECS remain enshrined in the new structure:

- To ensure that each country has sufficient coaches, qualified to international standards, to enable its athletics programmes to function effectively;
- To ensure that each region, and in turn, each country, is eventually capable of

educating its own coaches to the same international standards without dependence on outside resources.

Additional objectives of the CECS now include:

- To provide competence, knowledge and understanding of the theory and practice

Level IV	Level V
Senior Coach	Academy Coach
14-day Course	3 to 12 months Course
To develop performance coaching skills and knowledge	To develop a professional specialisation in coaching
Performance Coaches	Experienced and active coaches
Successful completion of Level III and one year of active coaching certified by MF	IAAF Diploma in Coaching or Equivalent Recommendation by MFs
IAAF Diploma in Coaching, after 2 years active coaching	IAAF Academy Diploma
IAAF	IAAF, Area, MF, self-funded
To coach a selected event group to performance athletes	To serve the MF in the chosen area of Academy specialisation
Athletics institutions (e.g. clubs), Member Federation	Member Federation, Universities, Clubs
by IAAF, recommended by MFs	by IAAF, recommended by MFs
On request to IAAF and approval	On request to IAAF and approval
CECS Level III/IV Lecturer Course Organised by IAAF	No. 'IAAF Academy Lecturer' Nominated - approved by IAAF
From six Event Groups	Chief Coach, Elite Coach, Coaching Development Director

- To make an appropriate contribution to the development of athletics in each community while respecting the values of that community;
- To increase opportunities for women to become certified and to work as athletics coaches;
- To contribute to making athletics the number one sport in schools by 2012.

The five levels of CECS awards

Level I

In 2006, the IAAF started to implement its ambitious Youth Athletics programme intended for both schools and clubs. The main objective is to make athletics the number one sport in schools by 2012. IAAF Kids' Athletics has been known in the past mostly as a fun and well-balanced introduction to athletics-like competition. The emphasis was clearly on the competitive environment for children aged 7-12 years but now with the introduction of the new Level I in the CECS, there is the opportunity to emphasise and develop the educational aspects of Kids' Athletics.

Additional to the provision of a cohesive education programme to develop the competence to implement the Kids' Athletics programmes of competition and training will be acquisition of the skills and knowledge to take children through the transition into the 'real athletics' of their youth years of 13-15.

Kids' Athletics and similar national programmes around the world have involved hundreds of thousands of children in fun, athletics-like competition. Without doubt, one of the greatest disappointments, and at odds with the response of children to these competitions, has been the poor retention of these children in the athletics community and their transfer to 'club athletics'. The new Level I will produce qualified Youth Coaches who will not only be able to train and prepare young children for Kids' Ath-

of athletics to coaches in order to equip them to provide opportunities for all athletes, regardless of age, gender, race or ability, to reach their potential;

- To foster the ethical and moral development of coaches;
- To provide a standard curriculum with a worldwide application leading to a professional qualification for coaches;

Stages of Athlete Development and the IAAF

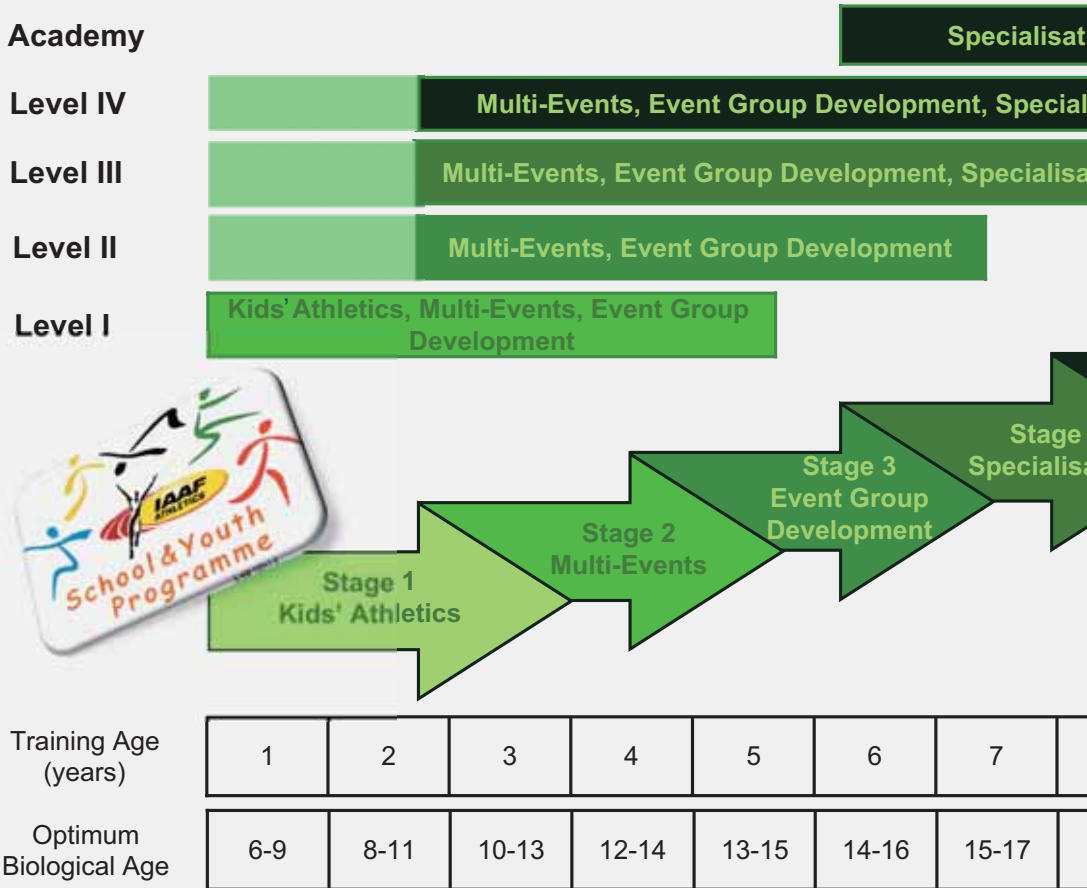


Figure 2: Stages of athlete development and the IAAF CECS

letics competitions but also provide the bridge to 'real' athletics. At the grass roots level, it is the affiliation to individuals that determines retention and Level I Youth Coaches will be competent to take the kids through to the programmes of training and competition relevant to 13-15 years of age. In the final analysis it will be these interpersonal relationships and the human element that will effect retention and transition, more than any impersonal system, no matter how well intentioned.

To make the most efficient use of resources and ensure the optimum application and activity, Level I courses will be conducted at locations in the countries of Member Federations, using IAAF accredited Level I Lecturers and standardised course materials.

Level II

The Level II course is intended to train coaches for effective work with youth and

IAAF CECS

Education, Performance

Education, Performance

Education

Stage 5
Performance

8	9	10 +
16-18	17-19	18-20+

The Role of Level I and Level II Coaches

Level I and Level II coaches will be the most numerous products of the IAAF CECS and as such they can make many important contributions to the development of athletics. After they complete their course, it is expected that the majority will work in schools and/or clubs with young and developing athletes, in other words, at the grass roots of athletics. In addition to the technical aspects of training their athletes, a Level I or Level II coach must also be prepared to fill a position of leadership, as one who works with young people and as one whose enthusiasm and knowledge help to build the culture of athletics.

After the IAAF and the Member Federation have made their contribution by providing the training, the real work begins. Both these levels of coach will be likely to be required to make a large commitment of time and effort with little or no financial reward. It is therefore important that they begin with a genuine interest in athletics, working to help other people reach their goals.

These coaches should also understand the value and importance of the opportunity that the Level I and Level II courses provide. It is vital that they continue to make use of their training and experience by remaining active in the sport. It also vital that a strong bond of continuing cooperation be built up between these active coaches and the Member Federation.

It is the philosophy of the IAAF CECS that coach education should be an ongoing experience. For this reason, Level I and Level II coaches are encouraged by the IAAF to join and be active in their national and regional coaches associations. Through the channels of cooperation with the Member Federation and membership in coaches associations, these coaches will be able to communicate with the IAAF and its RDCs and provide feedback that could lead to making their own work more effective and to improving the training of future Level I and Level II coaches.

beginner athletes, the 'club athletes'. The Level II syllabus covers all event groups and emphasises the practical skills of coaching. At the same time, the Level II course provides a theoretical base that is sufficient to allow coaches to continue learning, either through their own efforts or within the structure of the CECS. Entry for the Level II is granted to successful and active Level I coaches but entry can also be made directly by suitably profiled individuals (see Table 1).

On completion of the course, the Level II certified coach will be expected to be able to introduce athletes to the rough form of each event covered on the course. He/she will also understand the concept of long-term planning of training and be able to design and implement training sessions within a training microcycle.

To make the most efficient use of resources, Level II courses will be, as for Level I, conduct-

ed at locations in the countries of the Member Federations, using IAAF accredited Level II Lecturers and standard course materials. The course structure and timetable for Level II courses are flexible (provided certain specified requirements are met) in order to adapt to local conditions. The norm will be for a 14-day course.

Level III

The Level III course is designed to be an introduction to performance coaching for coaches who have performed well at Level II and have gained a level of coaching specialisation in one of the following six event groups:

- Sprints and Hurdles
- Middle- and Long-Distances
- Race Walks
- Jumps
- Throws
- Combined Events

With this specialisation, they can begin to meet their country's need for high-level coaches. It is anticipated that the majority of Level III participants will continue to Level IV. In addition to elements specific to the event groups, the Level III syllabus contains core elements that are common to all events.

On completion of the Level III course, a coach will be expected to be able to identify and coach the basic competition model for each event within an event group. He/she will also be expected to be able to plan and implement a series of appropriate training sessions within the context of an annual training plan.

Level IV

The Level IV course builds on the experiences of Level III and can be thought of as the development of performance coaching, providing coaches with advanced level instruction in their chosen event group. As with Level III, the Level IV syllabus includes event specific elements but more of the common core elements are now studied with a specific application to the event group context.

On completion of the Level IV course, coaches will be able to identify and coach high-level and advanced competition models for their specific event or events. They will also be expected to be able to plan and implement macrocycles of training for high-level athletes within the context of a multi-year plan. These plans should lead to the realisation of potential, elite performances and competitive results.

Level III and Level IV courses are conducted at the RDCs. Entry to Level IV is open to coaches who pass the Level III assessment procedures, have completed a minimum of one further year of practical coaching experience and have been recommended by their national federation.

Level V – The IAAF Academy Programme

Perhaps the most important educational initiative in recent years to support the development of key personnel in athletics was the introduction in 2004 of the IAAF Academy, which provides the highest level of professional education. The MSD has created partnerships with respected universities worldwide to offer Academy courses that blend academic rigour in the sport sciences with the practical experiences of the most elite of IAAF experts.

The Academy aims to provide the coach with the relevant professional knowledge, understanding and practical experience to create an environment capable of delivering high levels of individual and team performance at specific events, or the development of innovative coaching development environments, over multiple seasons. It recognises an athlete-centred approach and the role of Academy coaches as leaders and managers of a support network assembled around the athlete. Central to the design of each course is a philosophy that focuses on meeting the practical demands and challenges that coaches at this level face. Utilising a problem-solving approach, the perspectives of multiple disciplines are brought together in order to facilitate innovative and creative solutions. Coach-

es are encouraged to explore and develop the critical factors that impact on this process, namely their personal coaching, leadership and management skills. The components of 'Observation and Analysis', 'Feedback', 'Planning', 'Preparation' and 'In-event Performance' are examined from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Implementation of the new CECS

Major changes in any system require careful management, including ongoing evaluation of quality and progress. Change management can be considered both a process and an outcome. The creation, testing and implementation of the new CECS structure has been an evolutionary rather than revolutionary process. But it is also a process leading to an outcome: the efficient installation and operation of the new system. It must involve all partners to ensure that new CECS participants are catered for during the change, without ignoring the legacy and needs of existing CECS qualified coaches. This management of change must be applied in a balanced manner to each level of the new system, reflecting the fact that the work force requirements of a five-level system are substantially different from those of a three-level structure (see Figure 3). Additionally, the implementation has to embrace the translation of all materials, at each level, into the languages of the CECS: Arabic, Chinese English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Level I

During the second half of 2006, two Level I Lecturers' pilot seminars were successfully conducted in Mauritius and Beijing. Each participant was informed of their evaluation and encouraged to implement programmes of activity within their national federations. A pilot Level I course conducted in Boulouris, France, in early 2007 confirmed the previous experiences of the course content and finalised the structure and materials for the two complimentary elements of the course, *Kids' Athletics* and the Youth years of 13-15.

Following the testing, evaluation and confirmation of the Level I syllabus, curriculum and materials, the process of training and qualifying Level I Lecturers could commence. During 2007, nine six-day Level I Lecturers seminars will take place, one at each RDC.

Level II

The inaugural pilot course testing the Level II curriculum takes place in Brisbane, Australia, during December 2007. Following the course, there will be a process of feedback and evaluation involving Level II candidate coaches and, additionally, experts in coach education from around the world. During 2008, existing Level I Lecturers and appropriate new candidates will attend 7-day RDC-based Level II Lecturers' seminars. These will reinvigorate and add 'new blood' to the current Level I workforce by giving them the knowledge and competence necessary to become Level II Lecturers.

To permit a continuity of transition, the 'Old CECS Level I' course will be retained and operate throughout 2008. With the Level II Lecturers in place within Member Federations, Level II courses will commence in January, 2009, replacing the 'Old CECS Level I'.

Level III

The Level III curriculum and syllabus were finalised in April 2007. The design and production of materials took place throughout 2007. The inaugural Level III courses to fine-tune the content will be conducted at RDCs from January 2008. Level III Lecturers will be developed on-course from existing Level II Lecturers by working alongside one of 22 'Master Level II Lecturers'. These 'Master Level II Lecturers' have become both new Level III and Level IV Lecturers and it is anticipated that all new Level III Lecturers will have the skills and competence to be Level IV Lecturers as well.

Level IV

The curriculum, syllabus and content for the Level IV course were tested during sever-

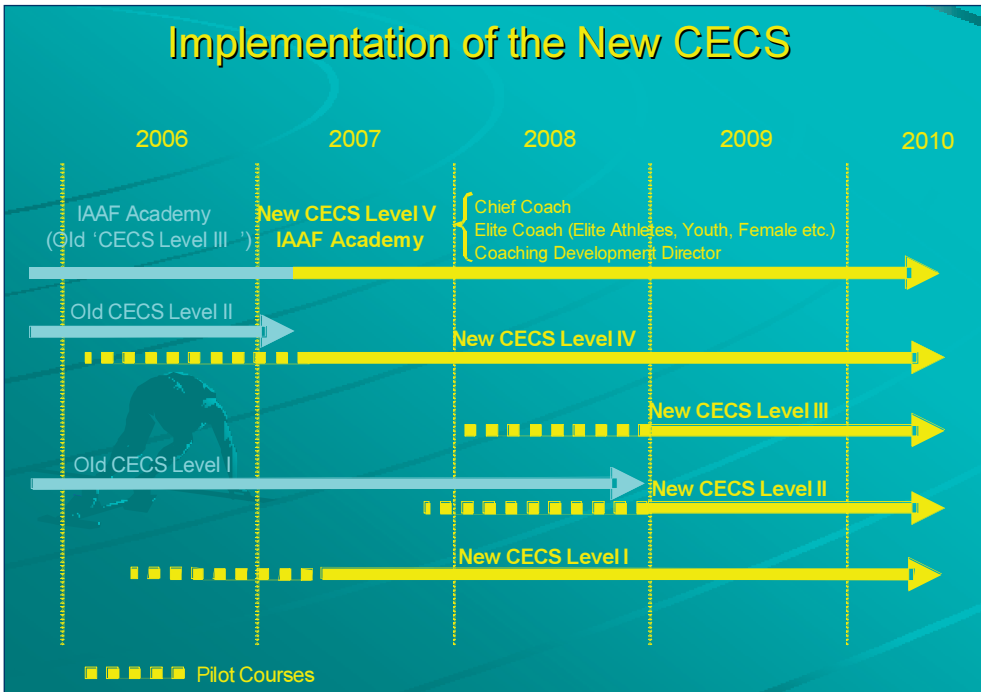


Figure 3: Implementation of the new CECS structure

al courses covering all six event groups and several languages commencing in 2005 and continuing through 2006. An editorial group of 22 experienced IAAF lecturers and coaches provided input and feedback, and in April 2007, the Level IV was finalised and implemented through all RDCs.

Level V – The IAAF Academy

The IAAF Academy commenced with the Chief Coach course in 2004 and has subsequently tested and added the strands of Elite Coach, through all event groups, and Coaching Development Director. The Level V, IAAF Academy, is fully operational and offers courses from a global network of 12 partner universities.

The Academy will continue to develop innovative courses to provide coaches with the relevant professional knowledge, understanding and practical experience to create an environment capable of delivering the highest levels of individual and team performance.

Terminology

From January 2008, there will be no longer any need to prefix any course as ‘new IAAF CECS’. Reference will be simply made to CECS Level I through CECS Level V, the Academy. The pre-2007 CECS Level I will remain, however, until the end of 2008. During the legacy/transitional period through 2008, this course will be referred to as the ‘Old CECS Level I’ course. From January 2009, the change to the new system will be complete and the process of transfer of coaches from the old CECS qualifications to the new can commence.

Transfer from the old system

All coaches who are active will be transferred on the database from their old qualification and eligibility to the new structure and subsequently informed of their new status. The global transfer date will be January 1st 2009. Table 2 illustrates how this process of transfer will operate.

Table 2: Transfer of qualifications to the new CECS (Global transfer date: 1 January 2009)

Old CECS Qualification	Old CECS Eligibility	Actively Coaching? ✓ or ✗	New CECS Qualification	New CECS Eligibility
Level II	For Level III	✓	Level IV	For Academy
Level II	None	✓	Level III	For Level IV
Level I	For Level II	✓	Level III	For Level IV
Level I	None	✓	Level II	For Level III
Level I	None	✗	Level II	None
New Entry	-	-	Level II	For Level III
New Entry	-	-	Level I	For Level II

One of the added benefits of this transfer process is the potential to identify and 'upskill' coaches who are actively coaching but were 'stuck' at an old CECS Level. The new system provides the opportunity for all active coaches to re-engage with the coaching development pathway, benefiting their coaching, athletes and national federations.

Conclusion

It is recognised that the world-wide development of Athletics is a massive, complex and ongoing process, reaching from the entry level up to Olympian and World Championship heights. Without a healthy grass roots environment children will not come into athletics, nor will they be able to develop their potential. Athletics is in competition with all sports and it is vital that it gains and retains the attention of children and youth. The new CECS is a challenging and ambitious programme that offers practical support for coaches and their athletes all along their developmental pathways.

Speaking about the introduction of the new CECS structure, IAAF President Lamine Diack said: "I am convinced that the new

IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System will have a very positive impact on the future of our sport. We are planting the seeds for long-term growth and our Member Federations will reap the benefits. With this integration of the athlete and coach development pathways, the IAAF CECS will take care of the 'seeds' from gathering and planting, through to maturation and 'harvesting'. In short, the IAAF has truly created a 'total coach education' system to meet the needs of Athletics now, and in the future. If the CECS achieves its aims, as I am certain it will, our endeavours will have been as successful as one could ever have wished them to be."

Reported by Peter Thompson

Peter Thompson is the Senior Manager for Education at the IAAF, having taken up the position in February 2007, and has been an active international coach for more than 36 years. From 1990-1997, he was the Project Director for the development of the IAAF Coaches Education and Certification System and from 1997-2007 he was a consultant to the IAAF. He can be contacted at peter.thompson@iaaf.org