



# THE COACH DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

2025



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The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has developed a structured and progressive Coach Development pathway designed to support coaches at every stage of their journey, from grassroots to professional qualifications. Whether you're just beginning your coaching career or aiming for higher-level qualifications, this pathway provides a clear and supportive framework to guide you every step of the way.

This document explains the key stages in both the Grassroots and Professional Coaching Pathways, detailing the required steps, key courses, and ongoing development opportunities in your formal coach development.

## GRASSROOTS

The **Grassroots Coaching Pathway** is designed to help coaches at entry-level, providing them with the Knowledge and Skills necessary to support children and adults at various stages of development. It's an inclusive, structured process that ensures coaches build a solid foundation of coaching and football fundamentals, before progressing to more advanced qualifications.

## GETTING STARTED

Before starting your coaching journey, there are a few prerequisites that every coach must fulfil:

- **GARDA Vetting:** Ensures that all coaches are cleared to work with young children and players.
- **Child Welfare Safeguarding Course:** A mandatory course that ensures coaches understand the welfare and safety protocols of working with children.
- **Basic First Aid Certification:** Provides coaches with essential skills to manage potential emergencies during training sessions or matches.



Once these steps are completed, you can choose the appropriate entry point based on your experience and the age group you plan to coach. The FAI offers a range of courses that cater to different levels and player age groups, as well as a variety of workshops designed to enhance your Knowledge and Skills.





# THE COACH DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

## ENTRY-LEVEL COACHING COURSES

The “Me & My” programmes are the cornerstone of the FAI’s grassroots pathway. This series of programmes includes several courses designed for specific age groups, allowing coaches to develop appropriate training techniques and coaching styles for each stage of player development:

- **Me & My Ball (Ages 5-7):** This course focuses on the fundamentals of coaching the youngest children. Coaches learn how to create a fun, inclusive environment that emphasizes positive movement, play, and ball skills.
- **Me & My Skills (Ages 8-11):** Building on the foundation laid in Me & My Ball, this course introduces more advanced skills, such as ball mastery, small-sided games, and fostering creativity among players.
- **Me & My Teammates (Ages 12-14):** Coaches learn to develop players’ tactical understanding of the game, focusing on teamwork while continuing individual technical skill development.
- **Me & My Position (Ages 15-17):** This course helps coaches refine players’ position-specific skills, preparing them for higher levels of competition and deeper technical understanding.
- **Me & My Club (Adult Players):** For coaches working with adult amateur teams, this course focuses on supporting grassroots competitive teams at the club level.



5-7 YEARS



8-11 YEARS



12-14 YEARS



15-17 YEARS



18+ YEARS

E-Learning and In-Person Practical



# THE COACH DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT ENTRY POINT

The right course for you depends on your experience and the age group you aim to coach. For new coaches, starting with the earlier stages helps build a strong foundation in coaching fundamentals. Remember, completing these courses also provides you with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) credits, which are essential for progressing to higher-level coaching licenses while also ensuring the formal qualifications you have are revalidated every three years.

## ADVANCING YOUR COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

Once you **complete two of the “Me & My” courses**, we suggest you take your time to test and develop your knowledge and skills in these environments and recommend two years of development before progression. Within this period, there are **multiple optional workshops to support more informal development**.

After this period, coaches are eligible for the **FAI Grassroots Coach Certificate**. This certification is an important milestone in the coaching pathway, validating a coach’s ability to manage grassroots coaching environments. The certificate is **valid for three years**, with renewal achievable by **earning 15 CPD credits** through additional workshops, courses, or conferences.

**Workshops** play a key role in expanding a coach’s skillset. The FAI offers a wide range of workshops tailored to different coaching needs. These workshops not only offer practical insights but also provide CPD credits to help coaches progress toward the **UEFA Grassroots Certificate**, which is the next step in the qualification journey.

From here, coaches can pursue the **UEFA C Licence**, the pinnacle qualification in the grassroots coaching pathway. Achieving the UEFA C Licence opens up **opportunities to move into higher levels of coaching**, such as working with professional teams.





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## PROFESSIONAL

The **Professional Coaching Pathway** focuses on the ongoing development of coaches who have already achieved a certain level of qualification. There are now opportunities to specialise in specific pathways, allowing coaches to develop relevant expertise towards the Youth Development Phase & Professional Game. Once coaches have obtained the UEFA B Licence, they now have the opportunity to specialise their own development with aims to further enhance their skills and knowledge.

**Continuous Professional Development (CPD)** plays a central role in this pathway, ensuring that coaches stay up to date with the latest trends, techniques, and methodologies in the ever-evolving world of football. It is important that we provide coaches with the opportunity to develop within their own specialist areas and develop expertise within these spaces.

While the Grassroots Pathway offers coaches the opportunity to develop specialised knowledge, skills, and experiences tailored to enhancing the underage game, the Professional Pathway equips coaches with the expertise required to navigate the demands of professional game environments, addressing the unique challenges of the senior game..

Coaches should be aware that coaching within the relevant environments are important pre requisites for entry to the relevant course levels. The **UEFA Youth B Licence** caters for coaches working with boys and girls, from U13 to U16. The **UEFA Elite Youth A Licence** focuses on preparing youth players, aged U17 to U21, for a successful transition into senior football.

The **UEFA A Licence** is highly focused on the senior elite environment, with course content tailored to this level. In contrast, the **UEFA Pro Licence** emphasises leadership and head coach roles within the professional game.





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## SPECIALIST COURSES

We offer a variety of specialist courses for coaches to branch off and be acknowledged for their expertise in the specialist areas of a multi-disciplinary team, including Goalkeeping, Fitness, and Futsal courses for example.. The FAI, alongside UEFA will support these specialist licences to broaden the knowledge of the coaching environment and develop the expertise required to support the relevant environments.

## REVALIDATION AND STAYING LICENSED

Once you've earned a UEFA coaching licence, maintaining its validity is essential. To keep your licence active, coaches must complete at least 15 CPD credits every three years. This ensures that coaches continue to develop their skills and remain knowledgeable about the latest developments in the sport.

**CPD credits can be earned through a variety of channels:**

- **Completing FAI workshops or courses**
- **Attending FAI coaching conferences**
- **Engaging with the FAI Learning Management System (LMS), an online platform offering modules and courses.**

The LMS is a flexible tool that allows coaches to earn CPD credits through online learning. Since 2021, all coaches holding an FAI licence must register with the LMS to track their progress and complete mandatory CPD credits.

For specialist licences, such as the UEFA EYA License, additional credits are required. Coaches must complete **five extra CPD credits every three years** to maintain their specialist licence status.

If coaches fail to meet the CPD requirements, they risk being reclassified as "diploma holders," meaning they lose their active coaching licence. Revalidation is possible, but coaches may need to repeat certain qualifications depending on their individual circumstances.

Staying current is critical for all coaches, and the FAI offers multiple opportunities to help coaches meet their CPD requirements and maintain their credentials.

Coaches can stay on top of CPD events and available courses on the FAI Learning Management System, where they can also track their progress and earn the necessary credits to keep their licence valid.

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**Great coaches never stop learning, and the FAI is here to support your ongoing growth and development at every stage of your coaching journey.**

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