

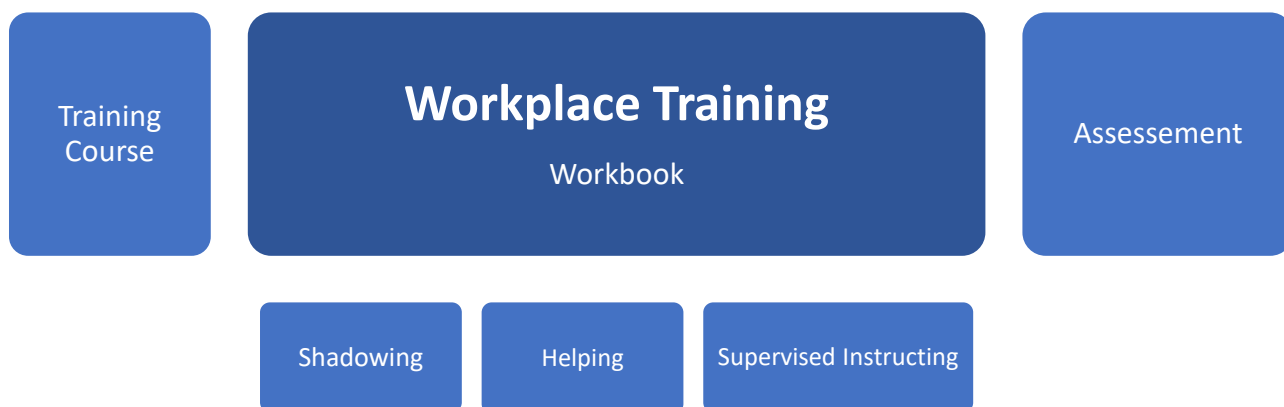


Mentoring and Supervision of Trainee Instructors and Coaches

Richard Barbour

The UK Snowsport Coaching Award Scheme includes structured workplace training in between training courses and qualification. As a coach who grew through this scheme, subsequently becoming a ski school manager, coach educator and business coach, I've experienced the value and rewards of effective workplace training from a variety of perspectives.

UK Snowsport provide course participants with an industry-leading Workbook for them and their organisations to optimise this crucial learning phase.



Effective mentoring and supervised experience during this training phase has a significant impact on both the candidates' learning to teach and success at assessments. This article concentrates on the mentoring and supervision of candidate Level 1 and 2 instructors, but the principles of mentor-supported learning can be applied across all coach development.

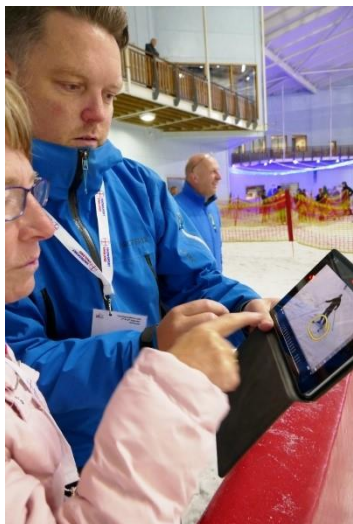
What is a Mentor?

Or should this be *who* is a mentor and what makes a *good* mentor?

Stop and reflect for a moment. Think about people from whom you've sought advice and guidance by tapping into their experience. Whether they knew it or not, they were probably being an informal mentor. You may have taken heed of their advice verbatim or used it as part of your critical thinking about the situation. Whatever happened, your thoughts and actions will have been influenced by that interaction.

I can think of a number of key people in my portfolio career who have been influential and sage advisors. Some have been formal mentors, helping me get qualified in industry and sport, and others were sought for informal mentoring about identified development areas. For the conversations and

resultant advice to have the desired impact, I've sought mentors with relevant specialist knowledge and experience and trusted that they have my interests in mind.



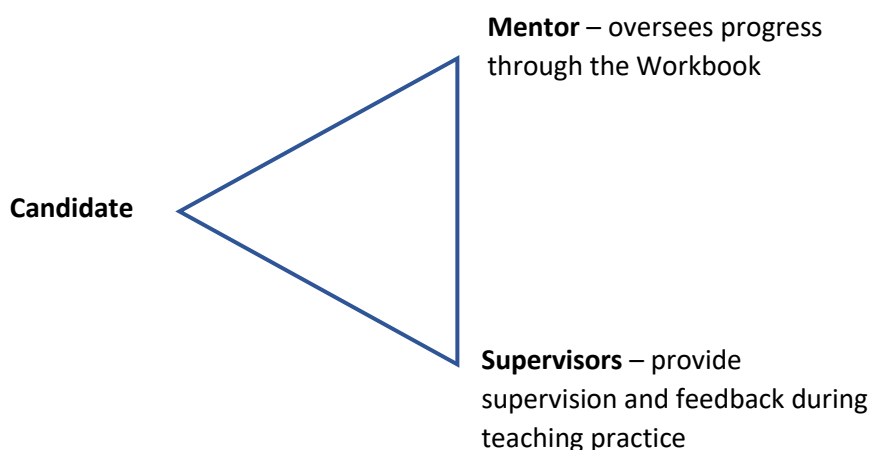
A snowsport mentor will normally have significant teaching and/or coaching experience and level of authority at the centre or club to make decisions about the format of workplace learning. They will know about the award pathway, the standards needed to pass the assessment and be able to guide them through the process. These insights help to steer the process and the effectiveness of mentoring interventions, keeping the trainee on track.

That's where the Workbook comes in.

Workbooks

The UK Snowsport Workbooks have been developed with a broad range of industry partners including heads of ski schools, coaches, facility managers and tutors. The modular format recognises that candidates have a vast range of backgrounds and prior knowledge outside of the sport and intentions within it. This recognises that individual clubs or snowsport schools have their own priorities for *how* things are taught at their facility and the Workbooks include tools to support them.

Candidates for Level 1 and 2 Instructor Awards are required to have a Mentor and Supervisor(s) during workplace training:





The Mentor

The Mentor oversees the candidate's progress through the workplace training. This involves providing an induction about it, monitoring progress through each unit, that the Workbook is being effectively used and then corroborated on completion.

Mentors need appropriate snowsport qualifications and attributes that are complementary to the role. They should be qualified to at least a level above the award that the candidate is training towards and have significant relevant experience.

Coaches who are licensed at Level 3 or 4, and have experience in instructor development, are a great starting place when seeking a mentor, as they have also actively trained through the Coaching Awards system. Not all qualified people have the skill or interests in mentoring and it's important that they recognise this and not take on the role.

A significant aspect of mentoring is the art of conversation. Some of the key learning identified in the Workbook: personal standards, Health and Safety and personal development needs, often benefit from off-slope conversation. Candidates need time to learn about the centre's standards and policies with this learning reinforced through conversation and writing down key learning points.

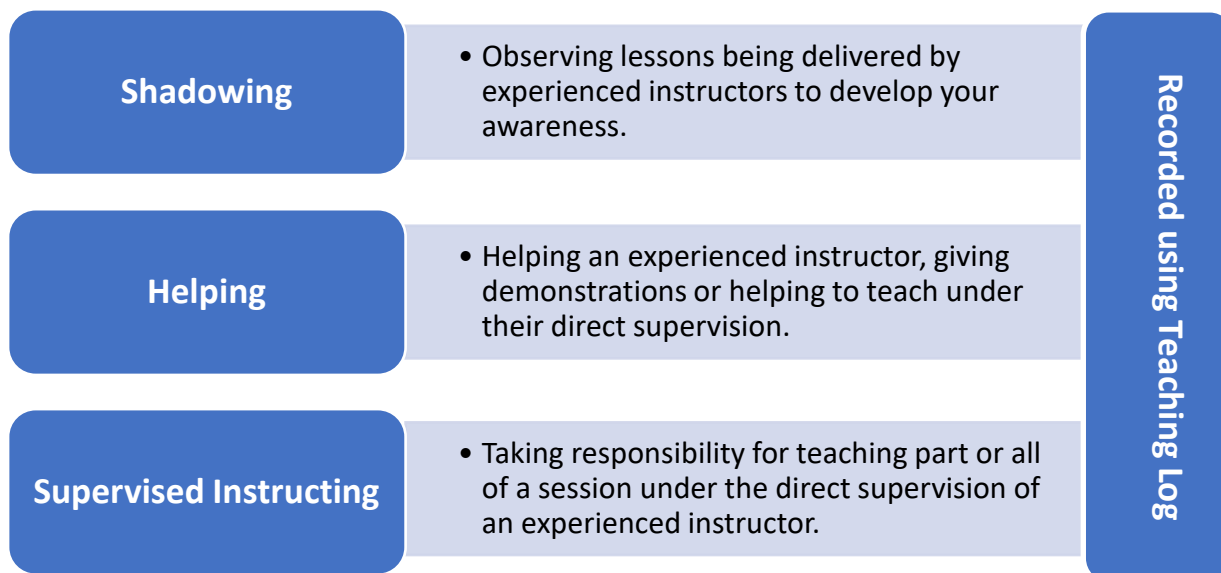
In addition to the off-slope learning the Mentor may also provide supervision of on-slope activities: the learning of *how* to teach. And it will be likely that there will be several other supervisors who will oversee this part of the process.

Supervisors

Supervisors are qualified personnel who facilitate on-slope learning by supervising practical experience: after all, you learn to teach by teaching. The centre or club should decide on and publish a list of people that are authorised to supervise trainees.

Supervisors perform a responsible role. They will be supporting trainees at various stages of development and taking overarching responsibility for maintaining safe practice.

After attending Governing Body training, candidates need to gain knowledge of the structure and workings of their local snowsport school, such as the lessons they are allowed to be involved with and opportunities to learn and participate. The Workbook structures this into three key development areas:



Shadowing

The shadowing phase is one where candidates expand their awareness by information gathering, mainly through observation and discussion. Candidates should watch lessons delivered by experienced instructors to learn about:

- the range of lessons that they will be authorised to teach once qualified
- entry and exit standards required for group lessons
- creating engaging and enjoyable lessons
- managing risks
- common tasks that can be used during lessons
- types of demonstrations that might be needed
- typical faults to spot and methods for correction
- how feedback is provided
- the centre or club's preferred teaching progression
- managing time
- concluding and reviewing sessions, signposting customers' next actions

Shadowing provides the foundations of knowledge necessary before starting to assist in delivering sessions. For this reason it's sensible for shadowing to be done with experienced instructors who exhibit the good habits that should be emulated. Placing them with an instructor known for subverting your ski school philosophy does not normally go well!

The development of underpinning knowledge doesn't finish here and continues during the next phase – helping.



Helping

The helping phase involves assisting experienced instructors by giving demonstrations, setting up or removing task-markers or giving individual attention to one of the class as agreed with the instructor. It builds the candidate's understanding of the teaching progression and how to teach.

The Supervisor needs to be comfortable that the candidate can reasonably handle the situation. These judgements can be supported by candidates regularly working with the same small group of supervisors, enabling rapport to develop. This normally helps with providing a structured, progressive development of the teaching practice.

At this stage and the next it's important to understand that the candidate is *under supervision*. They should not be left on their own and the supervisor needs to be nearby on the slope to provide support and intervene if needed. The Supervisor is ultimately responsible for the conduct of the lesson.

Supervised Instructing

Once the candidate has developed sufficient understanding and confidence it's time to put it into practice and take responsibility for teaching part or all of lessons. The supervisor steps back, so that the candidate is perceived by the pupils as being *their* instructor. However, they are able to intervene if they perceive a potential risk issue in need of mitigation or the customers' enjoyment level is insufficient.

As the supervisor and candidate will reflectively review the session afterwards they also need to hear what's being said. So the Supervisor must be attentive and close by.

The candidate will need to devise lesson plans and evaluate their success, through self reflection and discussion with the Supervisor after each session. Templates are provided in the Workbook.

Time should be made for this valuable preparation and the post-lesson reflection, review and feedback. Some of these reflection sessions still evoke vivid memories for me some 30 years later!

Record keeping

All Helping, Shadowing and Supervised hours should be recorded in the Workbook. This record is reviewed as part of the assessment and influences the assessor's selection of areas for further verification and assessment.

Session content/skill focus	My key learning	Hours			Supervisor name and signature
		Shadowing	Helping	Supervised Instructing	

As experience builds, there will come a point at which the Mentor considers that the trainee passes, what I call, the *Uniform Test*. This is when the Mentor considers that they would allow the candidate

to formally represent their ski school and to wear the ski school or club uniform. This will be when at least 20 hours of supervised instructing have been clocked up and that the Mentor considers that the candidate has developed sufficient ability that they could teach without direct supervision once they have received their licence. Around this time Supervisors complete some checklists and provide further evaluative feedback to the candidate. Mentors should be taking an active interest in progress as they will soon be involved in corroborating the Workbook.

Corroboration is a formal process requiring an official from the centre or club to endorse a simple form in the Workbook. They signify that they consider the candidate to be suitably skilful to perform the role unsupervised and are ready for assessment.

Experience at assessments demonstrates that the best-prepared candidates have made full use of the Workbook by following a structured learning approach, facilitated by skilful Mentors and Supervisors. Incomplete Workbooks will almost certainly result in an assessment result of *Not Yet Competent*. So make full use of the Workbook – it's a tool aimed at helping all those in the process: candidates, mentors, supervisors and facilities to succeed.

Summary

The UK Snowsport Coaching Award Scheme recognises the need for suitable and sufficient workplace experience and training, conducted in a structured, safe learning environment. Through this process the Governing Bodies and facilities collaborate in producing the next generations of instructors and coaches to serve the needs of participants and sport as a whole.

Look out for further learning opportunities with UK Snowsport Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

If you are interested in developing your mentoring abilities also consider the UK Coaching Workshop *A Guide to Mentoring Sports Coaches*: <https://www.ukcoaching.org/courses/workshops/a-guide-to-mentoring-sports-coaches>

UK Snowsport is the UK's unified Coaching Awards scheme created by the Home Nation Governing Bodies.



About the author: Richard Barbour is Chair of Snowsport England's Coaching Technical Panel and has written and edited numerous UK Snowsport resources. Having studied, worked and qualified as a civil engineer his obsessions with snow and coaching led to further careers, qualifications and awards in coaching and mentoring in sport and industry - influenced by mentors and by being a mentor and coach.