U.S. Soccer Coaching Education: What to Expect Beginning in 2027

A new framework prioritizes player development, clearer coaching qualifications, and ongoing professional development.

U.S. Soccer is preparing for a significant evolution in coaching education, with proposed changes scheduled to begin in January 2027. The initiative represents a shift in how coaches access education, earn qualifications, maintain licenses, and continue developing throughout their coaching journey.

The proposed framework is designed to align U.S. Soccer more closely with international coaching education conventions while placing greater emphasis on the age and developmental stage of the player. For coaches, educators, clubs, and soccer organizations across Oregon, understanding these changes will be important as the new framework moves toward implementation.

Please note: The changes outlined below were presented in October 2026 and remain subject to formal U.S. Soccer Board approval. Final requirements and implementation details may change.

A New Qualification Framework

One of the most significant changes is the introduction of a clearer distinction between **Certificates, Diplomas, and Coach Licenses.**

Under the proposed structure, not every educational experience will result in a coaching license. Instead, each qualification will have a defined purpose:

- **Player Development Certificates:** Introductory education focused on the age and developmental stage of players.
- **D Certificate:** A redesigned course emphasizing practical coaching application, player development, and reflective learning.
- **C Diploma:** Advanced coaching education and formal qualifications beginning at the C level.
- **B, A, and Pro Coach Licenses:** Advanced coaching credentials requiring ongoing professional development and renewal.

This structure is intended to provide greater clarity around what each qualification represents and how coaches progress through the pathway.

Player Development Certificates Replace Grassroots Courses

A key change for coaches entering the pathway is the proposed replacement of the current 4v4, 7v7, 9v9, and 11v11 Grassroots course structure with age-specific Player Development Certificates.

The proposed certificates are organized into three groups:

- **U6/U8:** Players ages 4–8
- **U10/U12:** Players ages 8–12
- **U14/U16:** Players ages 12–16

Each certificate would include a one-hour online module and a one-time, three-hour in-person learning experience. The new approach emphasizes the developmental needs of the players coaches work with, not game structure.

A Redesigned D Course

The proposed D Certificate would transition from the current nine-week format, which requires more than 55 hours, to a four-week course totaling approximately 44 hours, that includes 30 hours of in-person instruction.

Coaches would combine online learning, collaboration, practical application, on-field experiences, and reflection. Entry requirements would include completing one Player Development Certificate and all three online modules.

A transition provision would recognize existing Grassroots and D course eligibility for entry into the D and C courses through **December 31, 2031**.

Ongoing Development and License Renewal

Another major change will affect coaches holding a C license or higher, including goalkeeper coaching licenses at the corresponding levels.

Beginning January 1, 2027, the proposed system will introduce a three-year license maintenance cycle. Coaches will need to maintain active SafeSport certification and earn continuing professional development (CPD) credits appropriate to their license.

The proposed requirements are:

- **C and GK C:** 15 CPD credits per three-year cycle
- **B and GK B:** 15 CPD credits per three-year cycle
- **A-Senior, A-Youth, and GK A:** 20 CPD credits per three-year cycle
- **Pro:** 25 CPD credits per three-year cycle

Each credit represents one hour of eligible professional development. Under the proposal, an expired SafeSport certification would immediately invalidate a license. Coaches who fail to meet CPD requirements would need to follow the reactivation process, with a three-year window to complete missing credits before accrued credits reset.

Access to Continuing Education

There is also encouraging news regarding access to professional development. The October presentation indicates that virtual U.S. Soccer CPD opportunities are expected to be free of charge during 2027, although fees may be introduced in 2028.

This could provide coaches with additional opportunities to earn credits, learn from other practitioners, and continue their development without the immediate added expense of virtual learning.

What Does This Mean for Oregon?

Coaches and clubs should begin familiarizing themselves with the proposed certificates, redesigned D course, and renewal requirements for C licenses and above. Coaches should also keep SafeSport certification current and plan for ongoing professional development.

Oregon Youth Soccer will continue monitoring U.S. Soccer announcements and sharing updates to help coaches, clubs, and educators navigate the transition and access meaningful learning opportunities.

Ultimately, the success of any coaching education framework will be measured not simply by the credentials coaches hold, but by how effectively they use their learning to create better development environments for players.

Questions? Please contact Greg Maas, Technical Director, Oregon Youth Soccer, at greg@oregonyouthsoccer.org.

Source: U.S. Soccer proposed changes pending formal U.S. Soccer Board approval.