

SMART action plans

One of the great strengths of the RYA instructor training scheme is the positive and supportive approach that coaches and trainers adopt during the instructor training course. They recognise that trainee instructors come from a wide variety of backgrounds with a wealth of experience gained through their sailing career, and life experience from other areas such as their education, job, hobbies and interests.

Despite all this experience, candidates sometimes reach the end of the course only to find that the coach or moderator has decided that they are not quite ready to take on the responsibilities of an RYA Instructor. They are deferred.

Deferral of a candidate is not intended as a negative move. Instead, it offers a way forward to a successful outcome. For that reason, we don't say that the trainee has failed, but that there are areas where improvement is required before passing.

So how do they progress towards a pass? When giving the candidate the bad news, the coach must be aware that the conversation about what to do next may well be forgotten, misheard or misinterpreted by the candidate. At worst, it could be ignored, with the candidate trying to circumvent the system altogether!

So, it is vital that the coach or trainer offers a written action plan to the candidate, either during the de-brief or shortly after. This must include the areas they need to work on, how they can progress, the standard they need to achieve and who will determine when that standard has been achieved. The plan must be clear about the steps that the candidate needs to take towards a successful outcome.

The candidate needs a copy of the action plan to reflect on. The coach, trainer or the centre should also keep a copy so that, when the candidate returns for another try, there is an accurate record of what is required.

Next time you defer a candidate, make sure they go away with an achievable, clear action plan. Why not use the acronym below to remind you of the criteria?

Action plans need to be:

- S** – specific
- M** – measurable
- A** – achievable
- R** – realistic
- T** – time-based

There is an action plan template on www.ryatraining.org. Go to the Coaches area in the Running Courses section.