The United Kingdom Coaching Certificate is now a recognised ‘coaching’ qualification across all sports. Established and endorsed Nationally through Sports Coach UK, Dressage within the British Equestrian Federation was one of the leading 23 sports who led the initiative to strengthen the credibility of coaches within sport. Of more importance, this qualification gives our young people coming into the sport, the opportunity to follow a clear pathway of development, to give them standards of competence for a career in Dressage. For those of us who have been working in the sport for many years, it gives us an ongoing opportunity to improve the quality of what we do. Continuous personal or professional development (C.P.D.) ensures we stay current with the development of sport, motivates and inspires us and gives us the opportunity to share with like minded people experiences and challenges in our day to day work.

British Dressage continues to drive the competence of the sport by ensuring that those delivering the training especially at entry or ‘grass roots level’, are as skilled and competent as they can be. This ensures that training is delivered across all regions with as much consistency as possible. In turn we then show a pattern of excellence in the riding and training of horses and riders which is reflected at every level from Preliminary to Grand Prix.

When the motor car arrived on the scene in the early 1900s there was no need or requirement to hold any level of competence to drive one, would that be a good idea today?

When Dressage began to develop in GB as a discipline in its own right, there were no listed dressage judges – anyone could judge ‘dressage’. Look at the system we now have in place to ensure as much consistency and quality in our sport as possible.

All the equestrian disciplines are embracing the need to improve standards and continually be looking to improve. To stand still is to in fact move backwards as everything else continues to move forwards and change to develop. A qualification is ultimately only as good as the person who holds it. When that person strives to change the qualification’s ‘required criteria’ into a practice of sound standards, values and beliefs and practical competence demonstrated,
in their day to day coaching. Then the qualification becomes a valuable active tool for development of the sport. That is what UKCC can do for you.

Q. Why do I need a qualification when I have been teaching successfully for years?
A. To ensure that standards can be developed and improved by British Dressage in the long term through a recognised system of competence, which can then be maintained through C.P.D. (Continuous professional development)

Q. It’s going to cost me a fortune, what will I get out of it?
A. It is a fact of life that training and development is costly. See it as an investment in your future. (To drive an HGV you need a licence which costs a great deal, but once achieved it gives you a lifelong standard which can enhance your c.v.)

Q. Will I be expected to teach in front of other people? I hate being criticised!
A. To achieve any qualification you need to put yourself in a position where you are assessed for your competence. (Doctor/Vet/Teacher/Driver) You need to develop an ethos of seeing your assessors as people who want you to achieve the standard and will actively help you to work on areas of weakness that may prevent you from ‘passing’. Try not to see assessors or trainers as people who are there to only to criticise and inform you of all your shortcomings.

Q. Why can’t I just be given the qualification I’ve been teaching for years and have plenty of experience?
A. No formal qualification (in any aspect of life) can be awarded without some endorsement of standards. If this was allowed it would lay any system open to a lack of integrity and transparency which is obviously not acceptable.
Q. I don’t think I can be bothered with all the stress involved, can’t I just carry on as I am?
A. Of course you can and no one will dispute your competence if you are ‘out there in the field’ earning a good living from teaching. Without a qualification in the future, some opportunities to teach for B.D. may not be available to you.

British Dressage must look to the future of the sport in the years to come (not now or even in 5 years time, but vision probably at least into the next decade) It is essential that a structure is put in place for that future. The number of people coming into Dressage is expanding year on year and the number of young people wanting to make a career in dressage is also developing. By establishing UKCC in Dressage and then making a UKCC qualification a necessity for those taking BD camps and Regional Training in the future, the Training Committee are laying down a structure that will enhance the development of Dressage at all levels and give a sound career path for individuals wanting to work in the Dressage industry.

(1.Auty July 2013)