

November 2010
CODE OF CONDUCT
for Coaching and Mentoring

Part 1 Goals, status and general definitions

1. Goals

This Code of Conduct establishes a set of guidelines whose main goal is to ensure that practising coaches and mentors conduct their practice in a professional and ethical manner. It also gives guidance to professional coaching and mentoring bodies as regards the acceptance by their members of an appropriate Code of Ethics, and as regards their role in Monitoring this Code and applying Sanctions in case of breach.

This Code is also meant to inform clients of coaching and mentoring, and to promote public confidence in coaching and mentoring as a process for professional and personal development.

The Code is the basis for the acceptance by the European Union of self-regulated status for the coaching and mentoring profession.

The Code lies firmly within the mission of professional bodies to promote and ensure good practice in coaching and mentoring.

This Code of Conduct is a public document.

2. Status

This Code, unless and until adopted by a regulatory authority, does not have the force of law. Nonetheless, the fact that this Code has been adopted by the respective approving professional bodies, and accepted by the European Union as fitting to be published on its official list of Self-Regulated professions, is viewed as establishing a standard of ethical and professional practice.

In the process of making decisions regarding their professional and ethical behaviour, coaches and mentors must consider this Code of Conduct in addition to applicable national laws and regulations. If this Code establishes a higher standard of conduct than is required by law, coaches and mentors must meet the higher standard.

3. General definitions

Various definitions exist of coaching and mentoring and of their aims, and the following high-level descriptions are for the purposes of this Code and are not intended as definitive statements.

3.1 Coaching and mentoring are activities within the area of professional and personal development with focus on individuals and teams and relying on the client's own resources to help them to see and test alternative ways for improvement of competence, decision making and enhancement of quality of life.

Thus, a professional coach/mentor can be described as an expert in establishing a relationship with people in a series of conversations with the purpose of serving the clients to improve their performance or enhance their personal development or both, choosing their own goals and ways of doing it.

3.2 Coaching

One of the definitions of coaching is:

“coaching is facilitating the client’s learning process by using professional methods and techniques to help the client to improve what is obstructive and nurture what is effective, in order to reach the client’s goals”.

Coaching can also be described as:

“Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.”

Within organisational contexts coaching may include ‘one-to-one’ or ‘one-to-several’ interactions.

3.3 Mentoring

Mentoring can be described as a developmental process which may involve a transfer of skill or knowledge from a more experienced to a less experienced person through learning dialogue and role modelling, and may also be a learning partnership between peers.

Part 2 Professional conduct

1. Boundaries of competence

Coaches and mentors shall provide their services to populations and in areas only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their professional education and training, supervised experience, study, and professional experience. In other cases, where appropriate, they shall cooperate with other professionals by making appropriate referrals in order to serve clients effectively.

Coach and mentor specific competencies shall be measured against a Competency Framework which is broadly recognised at a European level (two examples of such Competency Frameworks are listed as Appendix 1 to this Code of Conduct).

If in doubt, coaches and mentors shall take reasonable steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients and others from harm.

For the avoidance of doubt, coaching and mentoring knowledge and practice fall outside the scope of mental health services. Therefore, should coaches/mentors be asked to provide services to individuals with a diagnosis of mental illness, services shall be referred to a general medical practitioner or psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or psychotherapist.

2. Training

It is recognised that there is a corpus of research-based scientific and professional knowledge in the disciplines of coaching and mentoring and that coaches' and mentors' practice is founded on this established knowledge. Practitioners shall therefore have or obtain relevant coach-specific or mentor-specific training which will include both theoretical and practical competence in the exercise of their profession. The final test of competency is in the ability to coach or mentor rather than in the theoretical knowledge.

3. Continuous Professional Development

Coaches and mentors shall undertake ongoing efforts to develop and maintain their competence through relevant education and training.

Coaches and mentors shall maintain ready access to a more senior and/or more experienced coach or mentor, whom they should consult on a regular basis whilst active on coaching or mentoring programmes. These consultations shall focus on areas such as supporting and clarifying issues arising from coaching/mentoring practice with clients, and helping to ensure ethical and professional conduct and continuous professional development.

4. Commitment to a Code of Ethics

4.1 Coaches and mentors shall explicitly abide by a Code of Ethics which at a minimum shall include the need for coaches / mentors to:

- a. Operate at all times within the limits of their own professional competence
- b. Seek to create the right environment for the coaching / mentoring to take place
- c. Make and honour clear agreements with clients and where appropriate with the sponsor organisation. Such agreements shall cover:
 - Context and agreed aims for the programme
 - Role of the coach/mentor
 - Ethical Code provisions
 - Programme details: duration, number of sessions, location etc.
 - Fees and payment conditions, where applicable
 - Right of the client to Terminate
- d. Maintain strict levels of confidentiality with all client information, unless required by law to disclose certain information
- e. Not make untrue or misleading statements (for example, concerning qualifications, competence levels, outcomes from the coaching or mentoring process, etc.)
- f. Not take credit for the work of others
- g. Not take advantage of clients in any manner (e.g. financial, sexual, etc)
- h. Avoid any conflicts of interest
- i. maintain, store, and dispose of any records created during their activity in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security, and privacy, and complies with any applicable laws and agreements

Two examples of existing Codes embodying ethical standards are listed as Appendix 1 to this Code of Conduct.

4.2 Professional coaching and/or mentoring organisations shall make it a condition of membership that their members abide by either of the attached, or an equivalent, Code of Ethics.

4.3 Professional coaching and/or mentoring organisations shall have and publicise to their membership a Disciplinary and Complaints procedure to deal with cases of suspected breaches of their Code of Ethics.

4.5 Coaches and mentors shall cooperate in ethics investigations and proceedings, and shall consider themselves bound by any resulting requirements imposed by the professional body to which they belong. Failure to cooperate shall in itself be seen as an ethics violation.

4.4 If coaches' and mentors' ethical responsibilities conflict with law, they shall approach the professional body to which they belong with a view to resolving the conflict in a responsible manner, in keeping with basic principles of human rights.

Part 3 Monitoring and Sanctions

1. Professional coaching and/or mentoring organisations subscribing to this Code of Conduct shall have an organisation and procedure in place to monitor and deal with cases of suspected breach.
2. The organ responsible for designing and overseeing the procedure shall be a Standing Committee ("the Committee"), and may be the same Ethics Committee set up to deal with issues arising out of breaches of Ethical Codes.
3. The Committee shall be composed of members of a professional body, and shall be such as to ensure no conflict of interest as appropriate. The members shall be appointed by decision of the Governing Board of that professional body.
4. Alternatively, professional bodies subscribing to this Code may agree to set up a single Committee to oversee the Monitoring and Sanctions procedures, with a view to acting for the profession as a whole.
5. The Committee shall have the authority from their respective Governing Board or Boards to impose sanctions where a breach of this Code has been determined.
6. This Code encourages the resolution of concerns about a member's professional conduct directly and on an informal basis, if this is appropriate and achievable. Complainants should first approach the individual or organization concerned about their complaint. The Committee may act as facilitator if asked to do so by either party and if this is considered helpful.
7. In case of a breach of this Code, determined after due process by the Committee, it is recommended that the following sanctions be imposed, calibrated according to the perceived gravity of the breach:
 - A warning or requirement to effect improvement in practice in a specific way, or to take suitable actions such as further training or additional and/or specific supervision, any of these to be completed within a specified time frame ;
 - Suspension of accreditation, authority to supervise or train, recognised status or membership of their professional body for a set period or until certain conditions are met ;
 - Termination of accreditation, authority to supervise or train, recognised status or membership of their professional body.
8. The Committee shall formally review the operation of the Code of Conduct on an annual basis, and shall communicate their findings to all other subscribing organisations with a view to discussing and agreeing possible changes to this Code over time.