

GLOBAL CODE OF ETHICS

For Coaches & Mentors

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The following bodies (“the bodies”) are signatories to this code of ethics:

- Association for Coaching (“AC”).
- European Mentoring and Coaching Council (“EMCC”).

As membership bodies, we are committed to maintaining and promoting excellent practice in coaching and mentoring. All our members, as part of their continuing membership, agree to adhere to the elements and principles of this code of ethics. This code of ethics aligns with the content and requirements set out in the Professional Charter for Coaching and Mentoring. The Charter, which was drafted in accordance with European law, is registered on the dedicated European Union database, which lists self-regulation initiatives in Europe.

This code of ethics sets the expectation of best practice in coaching and mentoring and promotes the development of coaching and mentoring excellence. Its purpose is to:

- Provide appropriate guidelines, accountability and enforceable standards of conduct for all our members.
- Set out how our members are expected to act, behave and perform when working with clients.
- In conjunction with our respective bodies’ professional competences, guide our members’ development and growth in the profession.
- Serve as a guide for those individuals who do not necessarily identify themselves as a professional coach or mentor, but nonetheless use coaching or mentoring skills in their work.

Where members fall short of these expectations and guidelines when working with clients, this code of ethics will be used as the basis of any complaint or disciplinary hearing and action following our bodies’ existing respective complaints procedures.

THE CODE OF ETHICS

The code of ethics is arranged into four sections and covers the bodies’ general expectations of professional behaviour and conduct:

1. Terminology
2. Working with Clients
3. Professional Conduct
4. Excellent Practice

1. Terminology

- a. Each body will define exactly which of its members and other stakeholders are expected to abide by this code (who are hereafter collectively referred to as the “members”).

- b. For proper understanding of this code of ethics (hereafter referred to as the “code”) members should be aware of their respective professional body’s definitions and terminology for the precise meanings of key words used in this code e.g. coach, coaching, client, member, mentor, mentoring, sponsor, supervisor and supervision.

2. Working with Clients

Context

- 2.1 Members will do their utmost to understand their clients’ and sponsors’ expectations and reach agreement on how they plan to meet them.

Contracting

- 2.2 Before they start working with a client, members will explain, and make explicit, their commitment to abide by this code. Members will also make their clients and sponsors aware of their respective bodies’ complaints procedures.
- 2.3 Before starting to work with a client, members will explain and strive to ensure that a client knows, and fully understands, the nature and terms and conditions, of any coaching or mentoring contract, including financial, logistical and confidentiality arrangements.
- 2.4 Members will be open about the methods they use, and on request be ready to supply the client with information about the processes involved.
- 2.5 Members will ensure that the duration of the contract is appropriate to achieve the client’s and sponsor’s goals and will actively work to avoid the client’s dependency.

Integrity

- 2.6 Members will accurately and honestly represent their relevant professional qualifications, experience, training, certifications and accreditations to clients, sponsors, members, coaches and mentors.
- 2.7 When talking with any party, members will accurately and honestly represent the potential value they provide as a coach or mentor.
- 2.8 Members will attribute ownership of work, ideas and materials of others to the originator and not claim it as their own.

Confidentiality

- 2.9 When working with a client, members will maintain the strictest level of confidentiality with all client and sponsor information unless release of information is required by law.
- 2.10 Members will store, and dispose of, any records regarding clients, including electronic files and communications, in a manner that promotes confidentiality, security and privacy, and complies with all applicable laws and agreements.
- 2.11 Members will have a clear agreement with clients and sponsors about the conditions under which confidentiality will not be maintained (e.g. illegal activity, danger to self or others etc) and gain agreement to that limit of confidentiality where possible.

- 2.12 Members will share with clients that they are receiving supervision and identify that the client may well be referred to in this context anonymously. The client should be reassured that the supervision relationship is itself a confidential relationship.
- 2.13 If the client is a child or vulnerable adult, members will make arrangements with the client's sponsors or guardian to ensure a level of confidentiality in the best interests of that person while working within current legislation.

Inappropriate interactions

- 2.14 Members are responsible for setting and keeping clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern interactions, physical or otherwise, with clients or sponsor(s).
- 2.15 Members will avoid any romantic or sexual relationship with current clients, sponsor(s), students or supervisees. Further, members will be alert to the possibility of any potential sexual intimacy between the aforementioned parties and take appropriate action to avoid the intimacy or cancel the engagement in order to provide a safe environment overall.

Conflict of interest

- 2.16 Members will not exploit a client or seek to gain any inappropriate advantage from the relationship – financial or non-financial.
- 2.17 To avoid any conflict of interest, members will distinguish a coaching or mentoring relationship from other forms of relationships, such as a friendship or a business relationship.
- 2.18 Members will be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest of either a commercial or personal nature arising through the working relationship and deal with them quickly and effectively to ensure there is no detriment to the client or sponsor or the member.
- 2.19 Members will consider the impact of any client relationships on other client relationships and discuss any potential conflict of interest with those who might be affected.
- 2.20 Members will disclose any conflict openly with the client and agree to withdraw from the relationship if a conflict arises which cannot be managed effectively.

Terminating professional relationships & on-going responsibilities

- 2.21 Members will respect the client's right to terminate the engagement at any point in the process, subject to the provisions of the coaching or mentoring service agreement.
- 2.22 Members will encourage the client or sponsor to stop the coaching or mentoring engagement if it is believed that the client or sponsor would be served better by another coach, mentor or another form of professional help.
- 2.23 Members understand that their professional responsibilities continue beyond the termination of any professional relationship. These include:
- Maintenance of agreed confidentiality of all information relating to clients and sponsors.
 - Safe and secure maintenance of all related records and data.
 - Avoidance of any exploitation of the former relationship, which could otherwise call into question the professionalism or integrity of the member or the professional community.
 - Provision of any follow-up that has been agreed to.

3. Professional Conduct

Maintaining the reputation of coaching and mentoring

- 3.1 Members are expected to behave in a way that at all times reflects positively upon, and enhances the reputation of, the coaching and mentoring profession.
- 3.2 Members will demonstrate respect for the variety of coaches, mentors and other individuals in the coaching and mentoring profession and for the different approaches to coaching and mentoring.

Recognising equality and diversity

- 3.3 Members will abide by their respective bodies' diversity statements and policies.
- 3.4 Members will avoid knowingly discriminating on any grounds and will constantly seek to enhance their own awareness of possible areas of discrimination.
- 3.5 Members will be cognisant of the potential for unconscious bias and seek to ensure they take a respectful and inclusive approach that embraces and explores individual difference.
- 3.6 Members will challenge in a supportive way any colleagues, employees, service providers, clients or participants who are perceived to be using discriminatory behaviour.
- 3.7 Members will monitor their language, spoken, written and non-verbal, for inadvertent discrimination.
- 3.8 Members will engage in developmental activities that are likely to increase their self-awareness in relation to equality and diversity.

Breaches of professional conduct

- 3.9 Members accept that any breach that is upheld may result in sanctions including loss of accredited status and/or body membership. The bodies may share details of such breaches between them in the interest of client safety, upholding quality standards and maintaining the reputation of coaching and mentoring.
- 3.10 Members will ensure that no false or misleading claims are made, or implied, about their professional competence, qualifications or accreditation in any published, promotional material or otherwise.
- 3.11 A member can challenge another member when having reasonable cause to believe that this member is acting in an unethical manner and, failing resolution, will report that person to the body.

Legal and statutory obligations and duties

- 3.12 Members are obliged to stay up to date and comply with all statutory/legal requirements in the country in which their work takes place and work within any organisational policies/procedures in the context in which the coaching or mentoring takes place.
- 3.13 Members will keep appropriate and accurate records of their work with clients and ensure they remain confidential, are stored securely, and comply with their country's data protection and privacy legislation.
- 3.14 In the context of the country in which the member operates, members will have the appropriate professional indemnity insurance to cover their coaching and mentoring work.

4. Excellent Practice

Ability to perform

- 4.1 Members will have the qualifications, skills and experience appropriate to meet the needs of the client and operate within the limits of their competence. Members should refer the client to more experienced or suitably qualified coaches, mentors or professionals, if appropriate.
- 4.2 Members will be fit and healthy enough to practice as a coach or mentor. If they are not, or are unsure if they are able to practice safely for health reasons, they will seek professional guidance/support. Where necessary/appropriate, the coach or mentor should manage the ending of the client work and refer the client to alternative support.

On-going supervision

- 4.3 To support their learning and on-going professional development, members will engage in regular reflective practice.
- 4.4 Members will engage in supervision with a suitably qualified supervisor or peer supervision group with a level of frequency that is appropriate to their coaching or mentoring practice, the requirements of their professional body and the level of their accreditation.
- 4.5 Members need to ensure that any other existing relationship with the supervisor does not interfere with the quality of the supervision provided.
- 4.6 Members will discuss any ethical dilemmas and potential, or actual, breaches of this code with their supervisor or peer supervision group for support/guidance.

Continuing professional development and reflection

- 4.7 Members will reflect regularly on their client work and coaching and mentoring practice and their professional and personal learning and development.
- 4.8 Members will develop their level of coaching and/or mentoring competence by participating in relevant and appropriate amounts of training and/or continuing professional development (CPD).
- 4.9 Members will endeavour to make a contribution to the coaching and mentoring community appropriate to their level of expertise. This may take many forms e.g. informal peer support to fellow coaches and mentors, advancing the profession, research and writing etc.
- 4.10 Members will systematically evaluate the quality of their work e.g. through feedback from clients and other relevant parties.