

The AC Global Code of Ethics

For Coaches, Mentors and Supervisors

June 2021



The AC Global Code of Ethics for Coaches, Mentors and Supervisors

Introduction and Purpose

All the bodies (“the bodies”) mentioned in section 5, as co-signatories to this Code of Ethics (“the Code”), wish to state the following:

As membership bodies, we are committed to maintaining and promoting excellent practice and ethical principles in coaching, mentoring, and supervision, a field becoming increasingly professionalised and supported by digital technologies including data science and Artificial Intelligence (AI). All our members, in their roles as coaches, mentors, supervisors, trainers/training providers, and students, as part of their continuing membership, agree to adhere to the elements and principles of this Code of Ethics.

The Code aligns with the content and requirements set out in the Professional Charter for Coaching and Mentoring. The Charter, drafted in accordance with European law, is registered on the dedicated European Union database, which lists self-regulation initiatives in Europe.

The Code is intended as a guidance document rather than a legally binding one that in detail spells out what a member can and cannot do. The Code sets the expectation of best practice in coaching, mentoring, and supervision promoting the development of professional excellence. Its purpose is to:

- Provide appropriate guidelines, accountability, and standards of conduct for all our members.
- Set out how our members are expected to act, behave and perform when working with coachees, mentees, supervisees (from now on to be called ‘clients’) and interacting with fellow practitioners, sponsors, stakeholders, and other professionals.
- In conjunction with our respective bodies' professional competences, guide our members' development and growth in the profession.
- Serve as a guide for individuals who do not identify themselves as a professional coach, mentor or supervisor, but apply coaching, mentoring, or supervision skills in their work.
- Be used as a basis of any complaints or disciplinary hearings and actions within the respective bodies' complaints procedures.



The Code of Ethics

The Code is arranged into five sections and covers the bodies' general expectations of professional behaviour and conduct as well as the list of all the membership bodies that have signed up to this Code of Ethics:

1. Terminology
2. Working with Clients
3. Professional Conduct
4. Excellent Practice
5. Signatories to the Global Code of Ethics

1. Terminology

1. For reasons of brevity this Code where appropriate refers to:
 - a. Coachees, mentees, supervisees, and students as “clients”
 - b. Coaches, mentors, supervisors, and trainers/training providers as “practicing members” or “members”.
 - c. Coaching, mentoring, and supervision work as “professional work.”
 - d. Coaching, mentoring, and supervision as “profession”.
2. The signatories to this Code acknowledge that the terms “profession” and “professional” are being used for activities that are not under statutory regulation but are being increasingly professionalised and self-regulated.
3. The signatories to this Code acknowledge that the titles “coach”, “mentor” and “supervisor” are not protected and may be used by anyone in the field of practice, member or not member of a professional body.
4. Each signatory 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").
5. For a proper understanding of this Code, members should be aware of their own professional body's definitions and terminology for the precise use of keywords e.g., coach, coaching, client, member, mentor, mentoring, sponsor, supervisor, supervision, training, and technology.

2. Working with Clients

Context

2.1 When professionally working with clients in any capacity members will conduct themselves in accordance with this Code, committed to delivering the level of service that may reasonably be expected of a practising member.

Contracting



2.2 Before they start working with a client, members will make this Code available and 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 work with a client, members will explain and strive to ensure that the client and sponsor know and fully understand, the nature, terms, and conditions of the coaching, mentoring, or supervision contract, including financial, logistical, and confidentiality arrangements.

2.4 Members will use their professional knowledge and experience to understand their clients' and sponsors' expectations and reach an agreement on how they plan to meet them. Members will also try to take into account the needs and expectations of other relevant parties.

2.5 Members will be open and transparent about the methods they use and willing to share information with clients and sponsors about the processes and standards involved.

2.6 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 promote the client's independence, self-reliance and sense of empowerment.

2.7 Members will ensure that the setting in which any coaching, mentoring, supervision, or training takes place offers optimal conditions for learning and reflection and therefore a higher likelihood of achieving the goals set in the contract.

2.8 Members should be guided by their client's interests and at the same time raise awareness and responsibility to safeguard that these interests do not harm those of sponsors, stakeholders, wider society, or the natural environment.

Integrity

2.9 Members will be suitably qualified to work with their chosen client group and honestly represent their relevant experience, professional qualifications, memberships, and certifications/accreditations to clients, sponsors, stakeholders, and fellow practitioners.

2.10 In communication with any party, members will accurately represent the value they provide as a coach, mentor, or supervisor.

2.11 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. Members will attribute ownership of work, ideas, and materials of others to the originator and not claim it as their own.

2.12 Members will disclose any conflict of interest and act within applicable law and not in any way encourage, assist or collude with conduct that is dishonest, unlawful, unprofessional, unjust, or discriminatory.

Confidentiality



2.13 When working with clients, members will maintain the strictest level of confidentiality with all client and sponsor information unless the release of information is required by law.

2.14 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) and gain agreement to that limit of confidentiality where possible unless the release of information is required by law.

2.15 Members will keep, store and dispose of all data and records of their client work including digital files and communications, in a manner that ensures confidentiality, security, and privacy, and complies with all relevant laws and agreements that exist in their client's country regarding data protection and privacy.

2.16 Members will inform clients that they are receiving supervision and identify that the client may be referred to anonymously in this context. The client should be assured that the supervision relationship is itself confidential.

2.17 If the client is a child or a vulnerable adult, members will make arrangements with the client's sponsors or guardian to ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality in the best interests of the client, whilst also complying with all relevant legislation and safeguarding practices.

Inappropriate interactions

2.18 Members are responsible for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern all physical and virtual interactions with clients or sponsors.

2.19 Members will strictly avoid pursuing and refrain from engaging in any romantic or sexual relationships with current clients or sponsors.

Conflict of interest

2.20 Members will not exploit a client or seek to gain any inappropriate financial or non-financial advantage from the relationship nor use the client's personal, professional or other data, without their consent.

2.21 To avoid any conflict of interest, members will clearly distinguish a professional relationship with a client from other forms of relationships.

2.22 Members will be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest of either a commercial or personal nature arising through the working relationship and address them quickly and effectively in order to ensure that there is no detriment to the client or sponsor.

2.23 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.



2.24 Members will disclose any conflict of interest openly and transparently with the client and if a conflict arises that cannot be managed effectively agree to withdraw from the relationship.

Ending professional relationships and on-going responsibilities

2.25 Members will respect the client's right to end the engagement at any point in the process, subject to the provisions of the coaching, mentoring, or supervision service agreement.

2.26 Members will encourage the client or sponsor to terminate the coaching, mentoring, or supervision engagement if it is believed that the client would be better served by a different form of professional help.

2.27 Members will prepare clients for the ending of the service including having a service continuity plan if the member is unexpectedly unable to complete.

2.28 Members are required to have a provision for the transfer of current clients and their records in the event of the termination of practice.

2.29 Members understand that their professional responsibilities continue beyond the end of the 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 that complies with all relevant laws and agreements that exist in their country regarding data protection and privacy
- 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 the profession

3.1 Members will behave in a way that at all times reflects positively upon and enhances the reputation of a professional service, ensuring that the use of technology is aligned with professional standards.

3.2 Members will demonstrate respect for the variety of practices used by members and other individuals in the profession and all the different ethically informed approaches to coaching, mentoring, and supervision, including the use of data technologies and AI.

Acting Responsibly

3.3 Members will abide by their respective bodies' statements and policies on inclusion, diversity, social responsibility, and climate change.



3.4 Members will avoid knowingly discriminating on any grounds and will seek to enhance their own awareness of possible areas for discrimination and bias, including in the use of technology or inaccurate or fake data.

3.5 Members will be aware of the potential for unconscious bias and systemic injustice and seek to ensure that they take a respectful and inclusive approach, which embraces and explores individual differences.

3.6 Members will challenge constructively and offer support to any colleagues, employees, service providers and clients who are perceived to be discriminatory or unwilling to take responsibility for their behaviour and actions.

3.7 Members will monitor their spoken, written, and non-verbal communication for implicit bias or discrimination.

3.8 Members will engage in professional development activities that contribute to increased self-awareness in relation to inclusion, diversity, technology, latest developments in changing social and environmental needs.

Breaches of professional conduct

3.9 Members accept that any breach of the code that is upheld in a complaints procedure may result in sanctions, including loss of accredited status and/or body membership.

3.10 A member will challenge another member if they have reasonable cause to believe that the member is acting in an unethical manner and, failing resolution will report that person to the body.

Legal and statutory obligations and duties

3.11 Members are obliged to stay up to date and comply with:

- All relevant statutory requirements in the countries in which their professional work takes place.
- Safeguarding legislation when working with children or vulnerable adults.
- The relevant organisational policies and procedures of the work context.

3.12 Members will have the appropriate professional indemnity insurance to cover their coaching, mentoring and supervising work for the countries in which they operate and where such indemnity insurance is available.

4. Excellent Practice

Ability to perform

4.1 Members will operate within the limit of their professional competence. Members should refer the client to a more experienced or suitably qualified practicing member where appropriate.



4.2 Members will be fit and healthy enough to practice. If they are not, or are unsure if they are able to practice safely for health reasons, they will seek professional guidance or support.

On-going supervision

4.3 Members will engage in supervision with a suitably qualified/experienced supervisor and peer supervision with a level of frequency that is appropriate to their coaching, mentoring or supervision practice, the requirements of their professional body and level of accreditation, and have evidence of engagement in reflective practice.

4.4 Members need to ensure that any other existing relationship within the supervision, professional or personal, does not interfere with the quality of the supervision provided.

4.5 Members will discuss any ethical dilemmas and potential, or actual, breaches of this Code including any arising from the use of AI and technology in general, with their supervisor or peer supervision group for support and guidance.

Continuing professional development

4.6 Members will develop their level of coaching and/or mentoring competence and supervision capability by participating in relevant training and future- focused, continuing professional development (CPD) activities.

4.7 Members are expected to make a contribution to the professional community that is appropriate to their level of expertise. Forms this may take include informal peer support to fellow practicing members, contributing to advancing the profession, research, writing, etc.

4.8 Members will systematically reflect on and evaluate the quality and relevance of their work and role through feedback from clients, sponsors and stakeholders, and other CPD activities, to improve their practice.

5. Signatories to the Global Code of Ethics – for Coaches, Mentors, and Supervisors

The Global Code of Ethics is an overarching ethical framework for the signatories and does not cover complaints procedures or every potential ethical issue.

Instead, it devolves responsibility for overall governance to each signatory to develop and apply specific policies and procedures that reflect the range of ethical nuances relating to diversity of practice and local or specific contexts.

Any such additions will not contradict the essence of the Code, nor carry an obligation for other co-signatories to adopt. These additions may be shared by signatories as part of on-going collaborative exchanges between professional bodies.



Signatories to the Global Code of Ethics will not become involved in any complaint that relates to another signatory organization. Any such complaint should be taken directly to that organization.

For more detail about each code signatory including membership, accreditation, standards, governance, and complaints procedures, please visit the signatories relevant websites.

The current signatories to the code can be found here: <https://www.globalcodeofethics.org/signatories/>

To explore how to become a Global Code signatory please contact feedback@associationforcoaching.com.

To download the Global Code of Ethics as a pdf, click [here](#).

Updated June 2021

