



# COACHING REGULATIONS & UNDERSTANDING THE ICF

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# Coaching Regulations

The coaching industry is not a government-regulated industry. In other words, there are no state or federal laws, nor regulations that govern coaching as a profession or define a scope of practice for those who offer coaching services.

This means there is no real accreditation for coaching.

**You can become a coach and start a coaching business without accreditation.**

However, professional associations have been independently established to help guide the practice. These associations are self-regulated and have created standards for those who work and/or plan to work as coaches.

## **Here are a few of the independent coaching organizations:**

- American Association of Professional Coaches (AAPC)
- Association for Coaching (AC)
- Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS)
- Association of Business Mentors (ABM)
- Association of Coaching Supervisors (AOCS)
- European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC Global)
- International Authority for Professional Coaching and Mentoring (IAPC&M)
- International Association of Coaching (IAC)
- International Coaching Federation (ICF)
- International Mentoring Association (IMA)
- Société Française de Coaching (SfCoach)
- Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC)

## Europe

In Europe, as of 2022, there is now a joint initiative aimed at self-regulation. Eight professional organizations have co-signed what is called the “*Professional Charter for Coaching, Mentoring, and Supervision of Coaches, Mentors, and Supervisors*”.

The Professional Charter reflects the mission of these professional bodies to promote and ensure good practice in coaching, mentoring, and supervision. It establishes a benchmark for ethics and professional conduct for these professions and is the basis for the development of self-regulation.

It is a public document, drafted as per European law and registered on the publicly accessible European Union database, co-managed by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee. This database lists self-regulation and co-regulation initiatives in Europe whose scope reaches beyond Europe. (see the [database here](#)).

The initiative is also designed to inform coaching, mentoring, and supervision clients, and to promote public confidence in these processes for professional and personal development, which serve society as a whole.

To download the **Professional Charter**, please see the “**Resources**” under “**Materials**” in this module.

### **The eight co-signatories to the Professional Charter are:**

- Association for Coaching (AC)
- Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision (APECS)
- Association of Business Mentors (ABM)
- Association of Coaching Supervisors (AOCS)
- European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC Global)
- International Coaching Federation (ICF)
- International Mentoring Association (IMA)
- Société Française de Coaching (SfCoach)

# International Coach Federation

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is the largest independent and self-regulated organization in the coaching industry.

Although they are the most recognized, it is important to note that you do not have to be certified or accredited through them to begin coaching.

The ICF established a Code of Ethics and standards of professional conduct which ICF members and ICF Credential must uphold.

The ICF has three of its own credentials:

1. Associate Certified Coach (ACC)
2. Professional Certified Coach (PCC)
3. Master Certified Coach (MCC)

Universal Coach Institute is an approved Continuing Coach Education (CCE) provider of the International Coach Federation.

This means we have specific coach training courses that are accredited by the ICF.

Please see the lesson "ICF Accredited Courses."

## WHAT IS AN ICF CREDENTIAL?

An ICF Credential is a professional certification indicating that you have met specific standards and requirements designed to develop and refine your coaching skills. It is an indication that you are dedicated to upholding strong principles of ethical behavior in coaching.

ICF offers three credentials, corresponding with the quantity of education and experience required to earn it.

The credentials are:

**Associate Certified Coach (ACC)** – Completed 60 hours of coach-specific education (at least 30 hours need to be synchronous) and 100 hours of client coaching experience

**Professional Certified Coach (PCC)** – Completed 125 hours of coach-specific education (at least 62.5 hours need to be synchronous) and 500 hours of client coaching experience

**Master Certified Coach (MCC)** – Hold or have held a PCC Credential, completed 200 hours of coach-specific education (at least 100 hours need to be synchronous), and 2,500 hours of client coaching experience

## ICF MEMBERSHIP

ICF Membership is not the same as ICF accreditation.

As an ICF member, you will have access to local and global networking opportunities, cutting-edge business development and marketing education, and a variety of research and resources to help you reach your coaching goals.

To become an ICF member you must be ICF accredited or enrolled in or completed 60 hours of coach-specific education.

<https://coachingfederation.org/professional-coaches>



# WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO EARN A CREDENTIAL?

Earning an ICF Credential is a rigorous process that provides legitimacy and credibility to Credential-holders. Each of the credentials (ACC, PCC, and MCC) requires the same five key components:

## 1. Education

Obtain coach-specific education aligned with the ICF definition of coaching, ICF Core Competencies, and ICF Code of Ethics.

## 2. Experience

Coaching experience hours must begin after you've started a coaching education program.

## 3. Mentor Coaching

Receive mentor coaching to strengthen your skills within the ICF Core Competencies

## 4. Performance Evaluation

Pass a performance evaluation(s) that assess your coaching skills against ICF standards.

## 5. Exam

Pass a written exam designed to test your understanding of and ability to apply the ICF definition of coaching, ICF Core Competencies and ICF Code of Ethics.

## REQUIREMENTS TO RECEIVE YOUR ACC CREDENTIAL FROM THE ICF ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Requirements	Level 1 & Level 2 Path Accredited Schools	Portfolio Path CCE or Non-Accredited Schools
<b>Coaching Education</b>	Completion of a Level 1, Level 2 or a full ACTP program, including final assessment	60+ hours of coach-specific education that include use of CCE program(s) or non-ICF accredited program(s)
<b>Coaching Experience</b>	100+ hours with 8 or more clients, of which 75 hours are paid. At least 25 of these hours (paid or unpaid) must occur within 18 months of submitting your credential application	100+ hours with 8 or more clients, of which 75 hours are paid. At least 25 of these hours (paid or unpaid) must occur within 18 months of submitting your credential application
<b>Mentor Coaching</b>	Completed in Level 1, Level 2, ACTP program	10 hours with a PCC, MCC credentialed coach or an ACC who has renewed, over 3 months or longer, 3 hours must be one-on-one
<b>Performance Evaluation</b>	Completed in Level 1, Level 2, ACTP program	Submit 1 recorded coaching session with transcript
<b>Credential Exam</b>	Required	Required
<b>Application Fees</b>	View Website	View Website

<https://coachingfederation.org/credentials-and-standards/application-path-comparisons>

## FAQ

### **How much power does the ICF hold?**

The ICF is a voluntary organization that attempts to govern and regulate coaching. Although legally, they have no power to do this, within the coaching profession, they are viewed as the strongest of organizations.

Keep in mind that over 95% of clients will not have heard of the ICF and thus care more about certification titles and training than governing bodies.

### **Do clients check to see if I am ICF accredited?**

As stated above, clients generally do not know who the ICF is and what they do. Clients are most often only concerned that you are trained and certified.

However, if you are seeking employment with large corporations, they often look for ICF-accredited coaches when hiring (they have generally been advised by coaches to do this.)

### **How long is my ICF certification valid?**

Your ICF certification is good for only 3 years.

### **What is the renewal process?**

To renew your ACC, you will need 40 more hours of coach-specific training, 10 hours of mentor coaching with an ICF-approved coach, and the associated fees.

### **Are there any documents I should read if I am interested in pursuing ICF accrediting?**

If you are interested in ICF accrediting you should review the following documents located below this lesson:

- ICF Code of Ethics and Standards
- ICF Core Competencies
- The ICF ACC Application

## Does UCI help me gain ICF coaching hours?

Please see the lesson “ICF Accredited Courses.”

## ICF CORE COMPETENCIES:

### A. Foundation

#### **1. Demonstrates Ethical Practice**

Definition: Understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards of coaching.

1. Demonstrates personal integrity and honesty in interactions with clients, sponsors and relevant stakeholders
2. Is sensitive to clients’ identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs
3. Uses language appropriate and respectful to clients, sponsors and relevant stakeholders
4. Abides by the ICF Code of Ethics and upholds the Core Values
5. Maintains confidentiality with client information per stakeholder agreements and pertinent laws
6. Maintains the distinctions between coaching, consulting, psychotherapy and other support professions
7. Refers clients to other support professionals, as appropriate

## **2. Embodies a Coaching Mindset**

Definition: Develops and maintains a mindset that is open, curious, flexible and client-centered.

1. Acknowledges that clients are responsible for their own choices
2. Engages in ongoing learning and development as a coach
3. Develops an ongoing reflective practice to enhance one's coaching
4. Remains aware of and open to the influence of context and culture on self and others
5. Uses awareness of self and one's intuition to benefit clients
6. Develops and maintains the ability to regulate one's emotions
7. Mentally and emotionally prepares for sessions
8. Seeks help from outside sources when necessary

## **B. Co-Creating the Relationship**

### **3. Establishes and Maintains Agreements**

Definition: Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to create clear agreements about the coaching relationship, process, plans and goals. Establishes agreements for the overall coaching engagement as well as those for each coaching session.

1. Explains what coaching is and is not and describes the process to the client and relevant stakeholders
2. Reaches agreement about what is and is not appropriate in the relationship, what is and is not being offered, and the responsibilities of the client and relevant stakeholders

3. Reaches agreement about the guidelines and specific parameters of the coaching relationship such as logistics, fees, scheduling, duration, termination, confidentiality and inclusion of others
4. Partners with the client and relevant stakeholders to establish an overall coaching plan and goals
5. Partners with the client to determine client-coach compatibility
6. Partners with the client to identify or reconfirm what they want to accomplish in the session
7. Partners with the client to define what the client believes they need to address or resolve to achieve what they want to accomplish in the session
8. Partners with the client to define or reconfirm measures of success for what the client wants to accomplish in the coaching engagement or individual session
9. Partners with the client to manage the time and focus of the session
10. Continues coaching in the direction of the client's desired outcome unless the client indicates otherwise
11. Partners with the client to end the coaching relationship in a way that honors the experience

#### **4. Cultivates Trust and Safety**

Definition: Partners with the client to create a safe, supportive environment that allows the client to share freely. Maintains a relationship of mutual respect and trust.

1. Seeks to understand the client within their context which may include their identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs

2. Demonstrates respect for the client's identity, perceptions, style and language and adapts one's coaching to the client
3. Acknowledges and respects the client's unique talents, insights and work in the coaching process
4. Shows support, empathy and concern for the client
5. Acknowledges and supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, beliefs and suggestions
6. Demonstrates openness and transparency as a way to display vulnerability and build trust with the client

### **5. Maintains Presence**

Definition: Is fully conscious and present with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded and confident

1. Remains focused, observant, empathetic and responsive to the client
2. Demonstrates curiosity during the coaching process
3. Manages one's emotions to stay present with the client
4. Demonstrates confidence in working with strong client emotions during the coaching process
5. Is comfortable working in a space of not knowing
6. Creates or allows space for silence, pause or reflection

## C. Communicating Effectively

### **6. Listens Actively**

Definition: Focuses on what the client is and is not saying to fully understand what is being communicated in the context of the client systems and to support client self-expression

1. Considers the client's context, identity, environment, experiences, values and beliefs to enhance understanding of what the client is communicating
2. Reflects or summarizes what the client communicated to ensure clarity and understanding
3. Recognizes and inquires when there is more to what the client is communicating
4. Notices, acknowledges and explores the client's emotions, energy shifts, non-verbal cues or other behaviors
5. Integrates the client's words, tone of voice and body language to determine the full meaning of what is being communicated
6. Notices trends in the client's behaviors and emotions across sessions to discern themes and patterns

### **7. Evokes Awareness**

Definition: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor or analogy

1. Considers client experience when deciding what might be most useful
2. Challenges the client as a way to evoke awareness or insight
3. Asks questions about the client, such as their way of thinking, values, needs, wants and beliefs



4. Asks questions that help the client explore beyond current thinking
5. Invites the client to share more about their experience in the moment
6. Notices what is working to enhance client progress
7. Adjusts the coaching approach in response to the client's needs
8. Helps the client identify factors that influence current and future patterns of behavior, thinking or emotion
9. Invites the client to generate ideas about how they can move forward and what they are willing or able to do
10. Supports the client in reframing perspectives
11. Shares observations, insights and feelings, without attachment, that have the potential to create new learning for the client

## D. Cultivating Learning and Growth

### **8. Facilitates Client Growth**

Definition: Partners with the client to transform learning and insight into action. Promotes client autonomy in the coaching process.

1. Works with the client to integrate new awareness, insight or learning into their worldview and behaviors
2. Partners with the client to design goals, actions and accountability measures that integrate and expand new learning
3. Acknowledges and supports client autonomy in the design of goals, actions and methods of accountability
4. Supports the client in identifying potential results or learning from identified action steps

5. Invites the client to consider how to move forward, including resources, support and potential barriers
6. Partners with the client to summarize learning and insight within or between sessions
7. Celebrates the client's progress and successes
8. Partners with the client to close the session