



Association for Coaching (AC) Individual Accreditation Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the AC's position on accreditation?

The AC supports individual coach accreditation as a way of helping the public and the purchasers of coaches/coaching services to identify effective coaches. If a Coach has taken the time and care to meet the criteria for coaching accreditation it should go a long way to demonstrating his/her commitment to client care. Accreditation cannot eliminate bad practice completely but it does minimise the chances of it occurring, and used in conjunction with an effective Code of Ethics, Guidelines of Best Practise and Complaints Procedures encourages standards of excellence.

Why do I need to become accredited as a coach – I've been coaching for years?

Ultimately, it's the coach's choice as to whether they pursue accreditation. Many of our Organisational Members tell us that this is an increasingly important factor in their choice in hiring an external coach and, according to our survey, accreditation was the number one issue reported by coaches for 2010.

How is accreditation different from a qualification? I've already got a qualification why do I need this?

The market place is becoming more demanding and buyers want to be confident about the quality of coaches they employ. Whereas a qualification indicates that at a point in time you had a certain level of competence, accreditation indicates not only this but also that:

- You can apply that competence in practice
- You have a successful track record with clients
- You work professionally through:
 - adhering to a code of ethics
 - continually developing your coaching through supervision, personal development and reflective practices

Is the AC just offering accreditation for Executive Coaches?

No. The AC is offering two forms of accreditation: one for coaches; one for executive coaches, called the AC Coach Accreditation Scheme and the AC Executive Coach Accreditation Scheme. Both schemes are equal in status, standard and rigour.

Doesn't the AC already have a coach accreditation scheme?

Yes. However, in reviewing the current accreditation scheme we found that the market and need for it have changed since it was first set up five years ago and a

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new approach was developed. Additionally, there have been a number of requests, in particular from corporate buyers of coaching, who wanted a specific executive coaching scheme that was more aligned with what they looked for when selecting executive coaches. This new Executive Coach scheme was designed with their needs in mind, from a number of forums we ran getting their input. We are very excited about both schemes (Coach and Executive Coach).

I'm already an AC accredited coach. What happens to my existing accreditation?

Current AC accredited coaches will transfer across to become an accredited coach at Level 2. The current accreditation lasts for 5 years from award and will remain current until it expires e.g. if you were accredited 3 years ago, you will remain an accredited coach for another 2 years. At the expiry point, we hope you will decide to renew your accreditation at either the same or higher level.

When can I apply? Applications are being accepted for the new schemes from the **1st of October, 2010**. After which time, you can apply at any time, though there are submission deadlines throughout the year, A new application form will be up for these schemes in July 2010.

Until then, applications for the existing (one tiered) Accreditation scheme will be accepted up until the 1st of September, 2010.

Can I 'top-up' my existing coach accreditation to the next, higher level now this is available through the AC?

Yes. As above, current AC accredited coaches transferring across to become an accredited coach at Level 2 can choose to complete the additional elements of the accreditation assessment e.g. Level 3 to gain the higher level accreditation.

What is an Executive Coach?

For the purposes of AC coach accreditation, an executive coach is one who coaches within an organisational setting. It is broader than a coach purely working with a CEO and/or top team.

What are the key features of the AC's new coach and executive coach accreditation schemes?

- 3 progressive levels up to Master Coach
- Active sponsorship by buyers of coaching and organisations in the coaching market
- Benchmarked against international industry standards
- Entry level accreditation offering a career path for trainee and newly-qualified coaches
- Top-up process from other coach training/accreditations
- Development focus with on-line guidance & support tele-calls

Why are there different levels of accreditation?

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We introduced a levelled model because, as the coaching market has become increasingly fragmented, buyers of coaching said to us that they are looking for coaches at different levels of experience and competence. Also, they said that, as more coaches appear on the market, they are finding it difficult to differentiate and choose between them. Accreditation can help both the coach and a buyer with this.

At the same time, people are making a deliberate career choice to become a coach, many full time. As such, a levelled approach to accreditation provides a clear career path for both aspiring coaches and highly seasoned, veteran coaches. It therefore offers a level of professional recognition and status that reflects varying levels of experience as a coach.

What are the different levels of accreditation?

The levels are:

Level 1 – Associate (Executive) Coach;

Level 2 - Accredited (Executive) Coach;

Level 3 - Accredited Professional (Executive) Coach;

Level 4 – Accredited (Executive) Master Coach.

Please note a separate Executive coaching scheme is available to those coaching in organisations. Level 1 is not an accredited level (see below - 'How will I know what level to apply for?')

How will I know what level to apply for?

Please read the application guidance and look at the accreditation assessment matrix showing the different elements to be undertaken and see how this fits your existing coaching qualifications, skills, and experience.

Level 1 is for those with some initial coach training and with a relatively small number of hours coaching experience. It is an entry level of membership and, while not accredited in itself, will help a coach quickly become accredited;

Levels 2-3 are for those with increasing levels of coaching experience and competence.

Level 4 (Master Coach) – is for those coaches with the highest levels of coaching experience and competence as befits a Master Practitioner.

I don't have a relevant coaching qualification. Can I still become accredited?

The AC is an inclusive professional coaching body and encourages you to still apply. We ask you to show how your coaching and coaching-related qualifications and experience match against the AC's coaching competencies.

How do I know that the AC's standards are relevant?

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The scheme would lack credibility and relevance if it were not meaningful. To make it so, the AC has therefore gone through an extensive process of design and consultation to deliver the new approach to accreditation. This has included:

- an analysis of the other main coaching bodies accreditation schemes;
- an evaluation and refresh of our current competencies, including adding ones for coaches working in an organisational context with executives; and
- a series of consultation workshops with organisational buyers of coaches and coaching, training providers;
- consultation with our members and the current accreditation /assessor team.

Feedback has been sought and changes made to our proposals.

What are the different elements of the accreditation process assessing?

Coaching context – you understand the context and system in which your coaching takes place;

Coaching knowledge – you have assimilated and can deploy knowledge about coaching and its application with a client

Coaching approach – you have a considered, well thought through personal approach to working/coaching with a client; at Master coach level, you are developing the body of knowledge about coaching;

Professional coaching ethics and standards – your coaching practice is based on a practical awareness of how to respond to ethical dilemmas that a coach can encounter and operate to a high professional standard

Coaching experience and training – You possess some coach-specific training (or equivalent experience) against the range of coaching competencies/ standards and have accumulated some post-training experience with clients

Coach fitness to practice – this is central to the AC's coach accreditation and being able to demonstrate this with a client. It is not overly-academic or too theoretical and uses a range of assessment mechanisms to gauge a coach's fitness to practice including client and supervisor experience logs and references; self-assessments of coaching competence; live demonstrations of coaching *etc*

Coaching continuous professional development – it looks at where a coach's professional development to date, the current and emerging development needs, and how these will be met in the next year.

What makes the AC's accreditation scheme different?

The AC's accreditation scheme is different because it:

- is of a recognised international standard of coaching excellence;
- is relevant to the wider coaching marketplace including buyers of coaching;
- is inclusive of a range of coach training, accreditations and experience;
- focuses on coaching practice - and demonstrating this with clients – it is not overly-academic or too theoretical;
- is forward looking in terms of a coach's development and professional growth.

How good is your assessment process?

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We are confident that our accreditation schemes are robust. The AC wants them to be recognised by coaches, coachees and buyers of coaches/coaching as highly reputable and as being the industry standard for high quality coaching.

Applications are checked for completeness on receipt before being assessed by a panel of assessors. All assessors are accredited coaches themselves and trained as assessors.

Isn't the application process bureaucratic?

We sincerely hope not! We have worked hard to ensure it is straightforward to apply. We believe it should be easy for you to understand what's required and how to apply and that this process should be encouraging and inspirational. We are making more of the application, assessment and accreditation processes web-enabled to make this even easier for coaches to apply.

Is my accreditation application confidential?

Yes. Only the assigned assessors see an applications and alls are handled with strict confidentiality. All assessors adhere to confidentiality agreement with the AC. Applications are shredded after being assessed.

How recognised is the AC's accreditation?

The AC is a truly international coaching body operating globally. As such, our accreditation schemes, trialled initially in the UK and ROI, are recognised world-wide.

What level of AC membership do I need to apply for individual coach accreditation?

You must be a member of the AC and have held this membership for at least 3 months.

I am already an accredited coach with another professional body, is this transferable to the AC?

The AC aims to be inclusive in both its approaches to coach membership and accreditation. The new accreditation scheme offers the possibility of exemptions from elements of it on a like-for-like basis if a recent equivalent can be evidenced with another coaching body/coach training provider. The emphasis will be the coach to show this equivalence and to meet all of the requirements of the new scheme.

What type of coaching supervision should I have to be eligible to apply for accreditation?

Providing you are in regular professional coaching-related supervision within a clearly defined arrangement, a variety of forms of supervision are accepted (e.g. 1-2-1; group/peer mentoring/supervision.)

Does the AC offer coach supervision?

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Coaches going through the accreditation process need to attend at least one AC-run Coach Mentor/Supervisor conference call. Calls run monthly and details are regularly posted on the AC Forum. For further guidelines on coach mentoring and supervision please read the document entitled ***Coach Mentoring and Supervision*** on <http://www.associationforcoaching.com/memb/ACSuper2.doc>

What if I stop coaching and decide to cancel my AC membership any time after gaining accredited status?

If your membership is not maintained and renewed annually, then your accredited status will no longer be valid. You would then need to re-apply.

The scheme requires a case study; what if my client refuses?

You will need to ask your client to sign a consent form. Although we ask for a case study to be presented in such a way as to preserve anonymity and client confidentiality, some employers are sensitive to their employees agreeing to be case studies. Therefore it is important to gain their agreement before spending too much time writing up a case study that you cannot then use in your application. Alternatively, you might choose a consenting client!

What if my application for accreditation is not successful?

Before completing the application forms, ensure that you feel confident that you meet the key criteria that are listed in the introductory letter and are able to demonstrate best practice. If you are not successful, you will be informed as to the reasons. Then at your own discretion you are welcome to reapply in full when you feel you have addressed the issues raised in the refusal.

Are the outcomes of accreditation simply Pass or Fail?

We believe that completing the accreditation process should be developmental in itself and you should grow as a coach through completing it. In addition, and to help your development as a coach, you will be provided with feedback from the accreditation process.

What will it cost?

Please look at the fees information on the accreditation webpage. We aim to make them as good value for money as possible recognising the time and resources required to assess an individual's application for accreditation and the market place value this provides the coach.

I'm confused about what's happening when. Help?

- Consultation phase – Sept 09-March 2010
- Announcement at the AC Global conference, March 2010
- Communication phase (including questions and final inputs) e.g. key documentation on the AC website; AC Bulletin article on accreditation; podcasts etc. April – Sept.
- Train/accredit AC assessment team on new scheme, June-Sept 2010
- Window opens for receipt of first applications, October 2010

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What support does the AC provide to help me become accredited?

In addition to the web-enabled application process to be introduced, the AC also offers the following support mechanisms to help you become accredited:

- enhanced 'How to...' guides for the coach – this will make it clear what we're looking for allowing you to demonstrate it;
- teleconference calls with an accreditation assessor to help answer your questions and guide you through the process once underway
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- e-mail responses to your accreditation questions (please contact us on accreditation@associationforcoaching.com)

We are also working towards making the entire application process web-enabled allowing you to record and submit your application on-line. This would include things like logging your coaching hours and uploading part-completed parts of your accreditation application prior to full submission later.

Okay, I've decided I want to become accredited. How do I start?

Follow the self-explanatory process on the AC's website. This can be found by clicking: www.associationforcoaching.com.

Firstly, read the application guidance pack and supporting information before completing your application. To download these documents please click: [add link](#)

I have a question that is not answered here or in the application pack, how do I find out more?

Please e-mail accreditation@associationforcoaching.com and a member of our accreditation team will get back to you as soon as possible.