



**Association for Coaching  
Supervision Report  
April 2005**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Association for Coaching (AC) has high standards and seeks to demonstrate its values of Integrity, Being Open, Responsive, Client focused, Educational and Progressive at every opportunity. Hence, it has recently conducted a piece of research that explores coaches' reaction to introducing Supervision and Accreditation. To read more about the Association for Coaching Supervision guidelines, please use the following link: <http://www.associationforcoaching.com/about/ACSuper.doc>

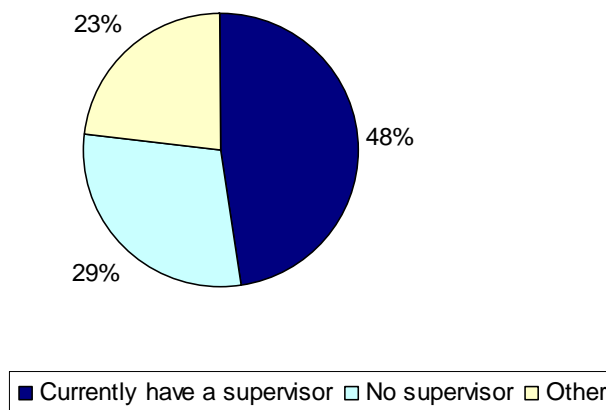
**RESULTS**

**Summary**

There were 162 respondents who participated in the survey conducted in April of 2005. Overall, the reaction to AC's definition of Supervision and Accreditation was very positive.

**Extent of Supervision**

Just under half of all respondents have a supervisor, while a third did not and the remaining respondents typically had a supervision arrangement of some description e.g. peer supervision, or supervision as and when they had a project.



**View of Supervision**

The vast majority of comments about Supervision are positive. However, there are some comments that point out the draw-backs. We have listed illustrative comments below. The positive comments far out way the negative but we have listed unsupportive comments so they can be considered and addressed, if appropriate.

*Illustrative supportive comments:*

- Excellent idea as people can describe themselves as a coach with no formal qualification so this is a start towards some form of regulation.

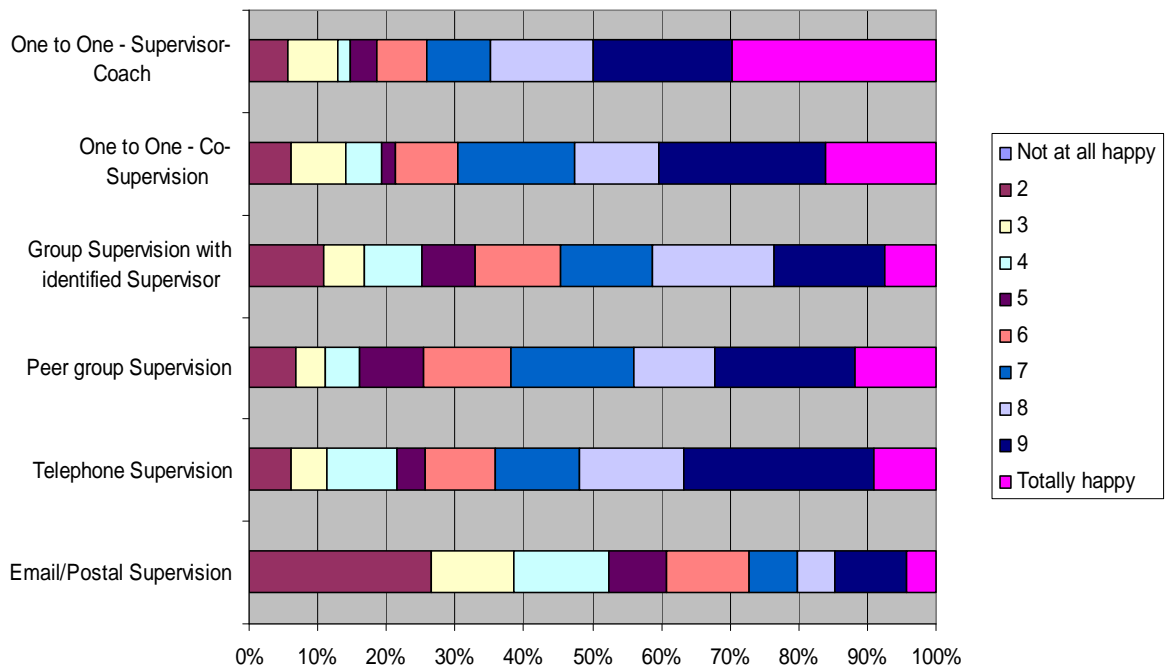
- The supervisor has the ability to enable the supervisee to become more critically aware of their own practice and to develop their internal observational skills
- As a counsellor of fifteen years, I can only endorse your indication that supervision is a vital part of the coaching process as laid out on page two. I think that the areas laid out are all important, but would also reinforce the thinking that supervision provides a place where coaches can be helped to become more aware of the areas where they may fall into avoidance because of personal stuff. I have been in supervision throughout the life of my clinical practice and have found that one of the most important things to consider in the supervisee relationship is whether the supervisee feel comfortable to disclose the areas where they feel they are stuck or don't feel that they are able to work to the best of their ability. These are the times when I have done some very good learning, to try to pretend that we know it all, all the time doesn't make sense. I believe that it is not necessary to be knowledgeable about the particular field where the supervision takes place, but to have a clear theoretical base to work from which enables the supervision to be both flexible and educational. It all works if the relationship is right and both parties are clear about boundaries and have the confidence to challenge where necessary.
- Yes I agree, as I believe that coaches can be like other consultants and work in isolation and tend to shy away from continued development and can easily become very subjective about their work. Having supervision is a bit like having a manager above you, which is very positive as you need people to challenge you in a very positive way. This also ensures ethical and professional standards are maintained and it gives the coach a program of development. However, for this to work effectively there needs to be clear guidelines and standards and the supervisor also has to be encouraging and agree to set standards and expectations.
- I have 20 years experience as a coach, but, I do not know everything! Also it is hard to be objective about your own performance. We also need affirmation that we are doing things right and someone to 'offload' on to when we have particularly difficult cases. My supervisor is a qualified and very experienced counselling supervisor. I feel confident that he can help with anything that might occur. Why a counselling supervisor? Well, we can all take someone through a coaching model or process, but, there are deeper issues like managing the coaching contract (which is at least three ways and complicated), dealing with issues of personal change (which involves the use of counselling skills and approaches) and being able to 'confront' supportively when difficult issues of giving feedback arise... to name but a few.

*Comments that challenge the concept of Supervision:*

- I think supervision could be very off-putting for a client. In addition, if a coach has already been trained to a high standard and has had their coaching monitored in some way, I don't think it should be necessary anyway.
- I think supervision is being confused with training /on-going personal development and needs to be separated out. Provided there is plenty of observation during coaching training, and the coaching training meets prescribed standards then I think that is sufficient. (The model for me would be the BPS standards for courses, such as Level A and B). Post training, I think supervision is largely a matter of personal choice and should not be mandatory. I am also concerned that a model which after all was developed for psychotherapists, counsellors and clinicians is being ascribed to "coaching". Coaching can be 100% psychological or 0% psychological. Face to face coaching in "real situations" cannot be supervised, as it cannot be in therapy. "Supervision" to me is having someone/some people to go to for help, sharing ideas etc., but "supervision" is not the right term for it.

**Views on the AC Supervision offering**

All forms of Supervision offered by the Association for Coaching, except email and postal supervision are received favourable with one to one supervision with a supervisor the most favourable. See the appendix for a detailed breakdown of AC's definitions of Supervision.



There was a lot of praise for Supervision and the AC's offering.

*Illustrative supportive comments*

- I agree with the concept and I think that supervision enhances awareness of our professional and personal needs for growth and development.
- It's good that the AC welcomes the idea that supervisors can come from different disciplines and skills (i.e., rather than just Psychology, etc), as there are different types and styles of Coaching. This is a more realistic way of working.
- The good part of the paper is the 'Protection-Development-Ethical Standards' framework which is clear and easy-to-grasp.
- Makes sense, though I would prefer to see more of a developmental and support emphasis for the coach rather than it potentially being seen as 'checking up' on the coach. This will ensure the experience is positive, and reduces the need for supervision to be compulsory as it will be voluntarily sought.
- I think it is very important - otherwise one could go for years down the wrong track. As part of CPD, I feel it is necessary, and for ensuring ethical adherence, I think advisable.
- As a relatively new coach I feel I need an objective assessment of how I'm doing from someone with much more experience than me. I have been told that I am "very good at coaching" but I believe I could be a lot better with guidance, pointers, affirmation etc. I concur totally with the information sheet view that "the less experience the coach has, the more experience the supervisor needs" and the logic that it is highly desirable that the coach and supervisor work from the same philosophical background in order for the coach to learn from the supervisor. My personal experience is that I have trained from different philosophies and while there are strengths in that, there is also the potential for confusion. It would therefore be invaluable to work with a supervisor who is a very experienced coach and could help me to sort out where the different approaches come into conflict etc.

*Comments that seek more from the AC offering:*

- The omission of any enumeration makes it difficult to refer succinctly to any paragraph.
- The omission of any explicit reference to the coach's 'mental model of coaching' and the supervisor's 'mental model of coaching' is a regrettable omission and a recipe for muddle. The general expression 'good coaching requires the coach to relate practice to theory and theory to practice' without any reference to the domain(s) of practice and theory is likewise a regrettable omission and a recipe for muddle. As it is expressed, the notion that 'the coach should comprehend fully the training, methods and orientation of the proposed Supervisor' appears to me to be misleading at best: how can I know whether I 'comprehend fully' the training, methods and orientation of the proposed Supervisor?
- The 'watchdog' approach effectively de-professionalise practitioners and can make them defensive. Constructive support through funded professional development is a far superior approach. I have watched this all as a teacher and speak from experience.

## Views on AC's definition of Supervision

A number of people want to see Supervisor guidelines, or standards and a few believe Supervision should be made compulsive.

- Will there be a more detailed document available for those who might be thinking of becoming a supervisor or wanting some guidelines (e.g. guidelines to supervision)?
- A set of supervision standards for coaching that details what coaches should be supervised against, which will ensure the relationship is absolutely clear about what the 'supervisor' will do for the coach, in the same way as the coach and client spell out their relationship.

*Not everyone is keen on the terms 'supervision:'*

- I'm not keen on the name of 'Supervision' as it has the undertone of someone watching over you. Although I really do believe that coaches should have a sounding board, although that's not a good name to call these people either!
- Definitions of different forms of coaching supervision are good. Responsibilities and methodology for the supervisor are not at all clear. Should there be direct observation of performance? I personally would prefer a term other than 'supervisor'. They are likely to be the coach's Coach rather than the person responsible and paid for ensuring the coach's performance as would occur in the line management sense of a senior coach supervising the work of others in, say, a major coaching project. The following ticks relate to 'supervision' in the sense of help and guidance sought and offered in response to problems I encounter or suggestions as to what I might come up against in an area of relative unfamiliarity.
- Why not use the concept of 'mentoring'? It has more positive associations for most people, and provides a context in which the entire professional development of the coach could be addressed - including issues about developing a business. Mentoring could also include the experience of being coached by the mentor as this would be one of the most effective methods of demonstrating what works.
- I dislike the use of the term "supervision" as it carries connotations too closely bound up with models of counselling and therapy - which from 17 years of experience can have a rigidly hierarchical quality and be more about "being seen to be getting it right" than genuine professional development. Coaching should be able to come up with a more creative model for furthering the personal development of coaches and ensuring quality of service to clients. Why not use the concept of "mentoring"? It has more positive associations for most people, and provides a context in which the entire professional development of the coach could be addressed - including issues about developing a business. Mentoring could also include the experience of being coached by the mentor as this would be one of the most effective methods of demonstrating what works. Coachville's "Coaching the Coach" approach is supervision without the name. In short, although there is a lot to be learned from discussing the coaching you have done and reflecting on alternatives, I think it is a seriously bad idea to mimic the requirements of counselling/therapy training in order to appear reputable, and that a more creative approach needs to be developed.

*There are conflicting views as to how many definitions there are of Supervision:*

- The process, to be kept as simple as possible, to promote transparency and credibility to private and corporate clients. Proliferation of supervision options could lead to fudging and vagueness of process. Like 'Super Vision', but would resist coining of other new terms (Co-vision etc) as these could sound like new age jargon to corporate business world and reduce image of professionalism. VS I like the AC approach that there is not one given way of accessing such support (super-vision) but many possibilities according to the needs of the individual.

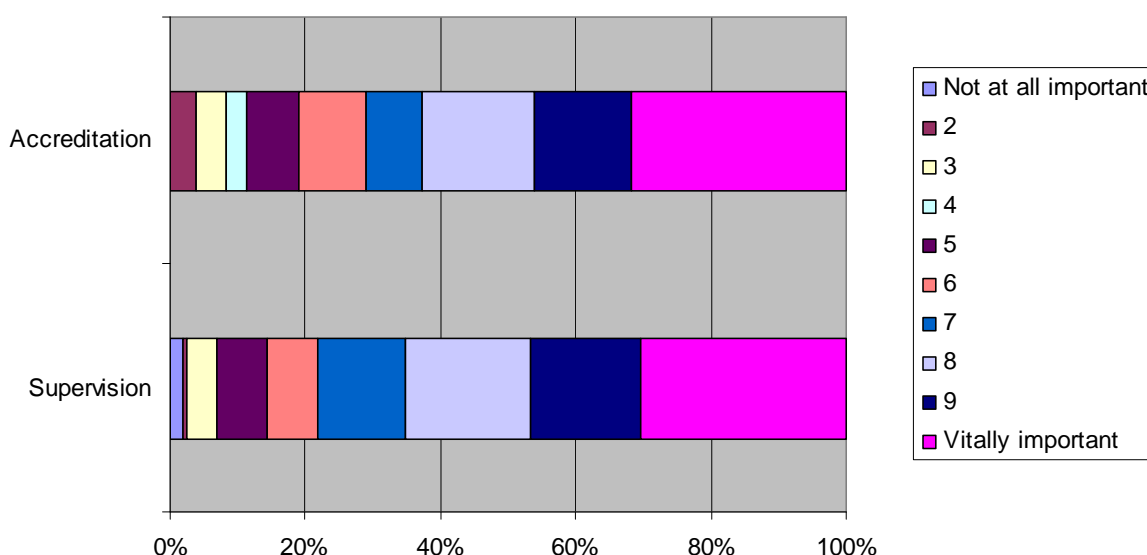
## Questions outstanding

- The paper doesn't give any thoughts on the ratio of supervision to client work or as a minimum.
- How would it work for self-employed professionals? How much time would it take, how long would it last? Is it a requirement for accreditation? Would it be paid? etc etc....
- How are supervisors selected and who supervises the supervisors? There is always a danger that self-appointed supervisors won't actually be practicing coaching. There are many different styles of coaching - even within students graduating from the same school of coaching. Also I would want assurance that supervisors are also practising coaches, with a minimum no of clients and there is a danger that some coaches could use supervision as their sole form of income.
- What does the supervisor do if they believe the person is not practising professionally?

- Is the purpose of this survey to start sorting the wheat from the chaff; the compliant versus the non compliant? There doesn't seem to be an opt out in the guidelines or sections determining the action to be taken if I choose not to be supervised. It seems to assume that everyone will have a supervisor? What happens if my supervisor says one thing and I choose to ignore this advise. Following discussions with some so called experienced coaches, I have been astounded by their views. Supervision by some of these people would be a non-starter in these cases. So i suppose I would prefer to get 'support' from someone I trusted and respected as your guidelines suggest at the level of a mentor, because to me a supervisor smacks of control; being managed; having someone else impose their views upon me - going against the very reason for becoming an independent consultant. I would also wonder how this would sit in relation to the Inland Revenue's 'Control Tests' of self-employment if the latter of my comments were to be true.
- From the document I was not clear as to exactly what format the supervision should take: i.e. simply discussion between coach and supervisor, or is the supervisor to 'listen in' on coaching sessions? Should clients be made aware that supervision is taking place, or that their details may be reviewed and discussed within the concept of the coaches' supervision?

### Views on Accreditation

There is support not only for Supervision but there is also a ground swell of support for Accreditation. Over 60% of respondents believe that Accreditation and Supervision are important.



### Examples of Accreditation Comments

The number of comments for and against Accreditation are fairly evenly distributed.

#### *Illustrative supportive comments*

- Accreditation gives a professional framework and ensures good practice.
- Any business needs standards. I am working very hard to develop myself and my skills to be able to confidently call myself a coach. I would like to think that some who has not been through a similar process should be able to coach without some accreditation
- I believe that with the expansion of coaching provision in the marketplace, accreditation will become one of the boxes that client's will tick in deciding whom to use.
- I can see how things are developing in the coaching profession. Accreditation, like it or not, is growing in importance to clients and coaches - if it gives confidence, it can only be a good thing. At the same time, I believe experience should be valued and accredited as well
- I believe coaching in the UK is at a stage when accreditation is important in building confidence in the profession.
- Now with 5 years of experience and thousands of hours of coaching I have never been asked for any qualification but in order to keep the standards of coaching up and keep the cowboys and fly by nighters out, accreditation is needed more and more.
- I am increasingly finding that particularly corporate clients ask for some form of accreditation. It also boosts one's own confidence to have it.

- My experience as a former CEO and business leader weighs very heavily on the way I perform my responsibilities as Business Coach and Mentor both thru group coaching and on a 1-2-1 basis. Accreditation, I view as an additional marketing tool

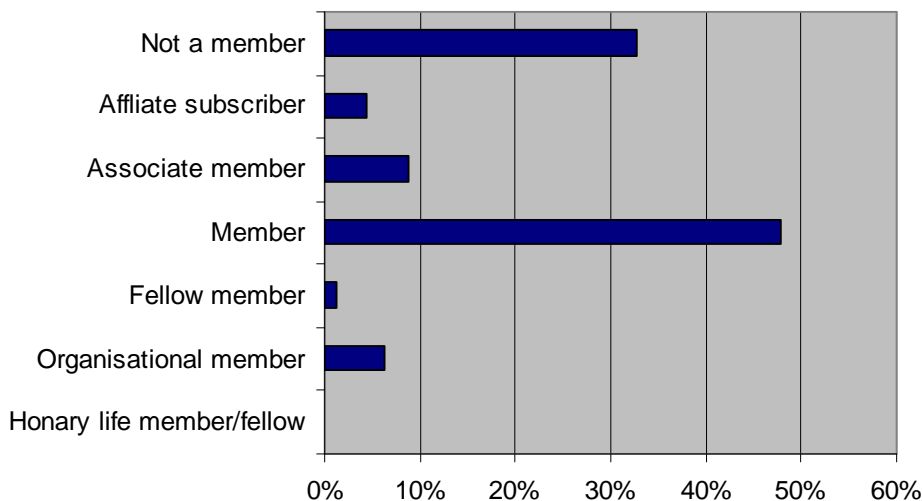
*Illustrative neutral comments*

- Accreditation from a business perspective is a variable importance. On the life coaching side clients I have worked with have been interested more in their goals than my qualifications.
- I think it's an important next level for the industry but if I don't have it it's not an area that effects my current coaching business. It may be something that I get round to at a later date.
- I am confident in my coaching ability. Unclear as to what accreditation would do for me.

*Illustrative unsupportive comments*

- I think that this emphasis on formalising qualifications can stifle individual working practices. Whilst I am in favour of high quality work, there is a danger of going too far down the route of cyclical referencing and over protecting with supervision and accreditation.
- I think it's subjective and it's more important to work on your own CPD in specific areas of interest/requirement for your personal development whilst potentially increasing the depth of service you offer clients. For me, coaching is only part of what I do.
- I think it is important to be thoroughly trained, supervised and in continuous development. Accreditation as such does not make a good Coach: - A lot of the early Coaches do not have accreditation and yet are trained, highly experienced and effective.
- So many people are accredited and are not very good. Accredited is not competent. For me, past references and experiences are more credible.
- As someone who is a coach but also employs external coaches for my organisation, I would welcome a recognised accreditation to know I'm getting value for my money. Also having paid a great deal of money to a coach for myself recently, I was very unhappy with the results, so would welcome a body who could recommend an accredited coach.
- Accreditation can mean so many things and it's not clear whether we're talking about the coach or the supervisor. I am confident that I am suitably qualified to carry out the work I do and I'm confident my supervisor is suitably qualified to supervise me. An externally specified standard wouldn't actually change that view.

Respondents were broadly split between members and non-members.



**THANK YOU...**

For all your comments. They will be consulted when expanding future guidelines. We have now set up a dedicated email address for you to contact us at with additional thoughts and comments about Supervision and Accreditation: [competency@associationforcoaching.com](mailto:competency@associationforcoaching.com).

## **APPENDIX**

### ***One to One - Supervisor-Coach:***

A single supervisor provides supervision for one other coach. Inexperienced coaches need to choose a supervisor who has been a practising coach for a number of years.

### ***One to One - Peer Supervision:***

Two participants provide supervision for each other by alternating the roles of supervisor and coach. Normally the time available for Supervision is divided equally between them.

### ***Group Supervision with Identified Supervisor(s):***

There are many ways of providing group supervision. At one end of the spectrum the supervisor, acting as leader, will take responsibility for apportioning the time between the coaches concentrating on the work of individuals in turn. At the other end of the range, the coaches allocate supervision time between themselves using the supervisor as a technical resource.

### ***Peer Group Supervision:***

Three or more coaches share the responsibility for providing each other's supervision within the group context. Normally they will consider themselves to be broadly of equal status, training or experience. Experienced coaches may at times find peer group supervision sufficient. It is not, however, recommended for trainees or newly qualified coaches. Peers may be reluctant to confront each other and may lack the wider experienced perspective considered an essential ingredient of Supervision. Where a peer group does exist, it is essential it there is a clear understanding of where the final responsibility for the clients' welfare rests.

### ***Telephone Supervision***

It is not uncommon for a coach to engage in telephone supervision either as the main form of supervision or as an adjunct to a more traditional face-to-face model. Some supervisors also offer group telesupervision sessions.

### ***Email/Postal Supervision***

For those who due to location may live in isolated areas Email Supervision with the provision of taped work could prove a useful way of working. However, it would be best if this method was combined with the Telephone Supervision option mentioned above as it is unlikely that the email/postal option would be sufficient on its own.

Some coaches use a combination of these models.