



Professional Coaching Code

The professional associations that have signed the Professional Coaching Code provide assurances in the area of professionalism to people and organizations that hire a coach affiliated with them. This guarantee is important for the protection of those who use coaching and for maintaining the reputation of the profession.

'Professional coaching is committed to the development of people and organizations'

In coaching, people share very personal issues with the intention of weighing options and making choices themselves. This calls for a professional standard of the coaching profession that is also transparent and verifiable. To achieve this professional standard, it is not enough to only look at the required individual qualifications of individual coaches. As a professional group, we also have a collective responsibility to provide a standard for the profession of professional coaching and bring transparency to it. As professional associations in the Netherlands in the field of coaching, we jointly stand for the Professional Coaching Code. This code prescribes what coaches, on the one hand, and professional associations, on the other hand, must at least comply with to rightly call themselves professional.

What is the professional standard that we, as professional associations, endorse?

The Professional Coaching Code serves as a baseline for quality and professionalism.

- Joining one of the undersigning professional associations is possible if you as an individual meet the admission and certification requirements of the relevant professional association.
- Joining this Professional Coaching Code is possible for any professional association that meets the established criteria. The details are explained in the appendix.

1. Professional coaches meet 5 criteria:

1. They are affiliated with a professional association (see below)
2. They endorse the (Ethical) Code of Conduct of the professional association
3. They are verifiable and certified by the professional association
4. They sign the complaints regulations of the professional association
5. They commit to ongoing professional development with education and group coaching, and supervision and/or coaching



2. Professional associations are characterized by 3 criteria:

1. There is an admission policy, and the professional association ensures that affiliated coaches are (re)certified
2. They ensure that professional coaches can be found on the website of the professional association
3. They ensure that complaints are handled by an independent body, acting based on the (Ethical) Code of Conduct of the professional association

To clarify the definition of professional associations, the (Ethical) Code of Conduct, certification and the independence of complaint handling, these four key concepts are elaborated in the appendix. Professional associations that meet these criteria can join the Professional Coaching Code.

Signed, November 19, 2024

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APPENDIX TO THE PROFESSIONAL COACHING CODE

1. Value of a professional association

A professional association is a group of professionals within the same field who have organized themselves and are committed to the development and quality assurance of the professional and the field. Think of (post-graduate) training programs, knowledge sharing, innovation, dispute procedures, quality registers, etc. With people affiliated with a professional association, you can expect them to practice their profession professionally.

2. Collaborating professional associations

In the Netherlands, there are different professional associations for coaching, each with its own accent and identity. What unites professional associations is that they approach coaching as a profession and are committed to its development. In recent years, the professional associations NOBCO, ICF, LVSC, Noloc and StiR noted a need for a common professional standard in the field of coaching. Such a standard is missed precisely because the profession of "coach" is not a protected title. At the same time, there are criteria that a professional coach meets. And there are also criteria for professional associations that qualify an association as professional.

This appendix elaborates on the criteria for the different components. The code lays down:

1. the criteria that a professional coaching association meets;
2. the criteria that the (Ethical) Code of Conduct meets;
3. the criteria that an independent complaints committee meets;
4. the criteria by which a coach's professionalism can be assessed (certification).

3. Criteria for a professional coaching association

1. The organization is a non-profit foundation or association
2. The organization uses a definition of coaching that describes the profession and delineates it from other fields;
3. The organization has a professional standard by which coaches are certified
4. The organization has an (Ethical) Code of Conduct;
5. The organization ensures that coaches are (re)certified and registers and publishes this, so that they are recognizable and findable for the outside world;
6. The organization has established an independent complaints committee.

4. Criteria for the (Ethical) Code of Conduct

The professional association uses an (Ethical) Code of Conduct that is reviewed at least once every three years to keep it current. The professional association ensures that affiliated coaches endorse the (Ethical) Code of Conduct by signing it and communicating about it on their own website.

The (Ethical) Code of Conduct covers:

1. Responsibility towards clients. This includes matters such as confidentiality, roles and responsibilities, financial agreements, information exchange, conflicts of interest, privacy and quality of coaching;
2. Responsibility towards practice and performance. This includes matters such as awareness of one's own limitations in the coaching profession, both during and after coaching, and acting accordingly;
3. Responsibility regarding professionalism. This includes matters such as explicitly stating clear boundaries to clients, integrity regarding level and education. Elements of ethics are: a conscious ongoing learning process, a combination of theory and practical cases and reflection;
4. Responsibility to society. This includes matters such as promoting equality and inclusivity, respecting intellectual property rights, honesty, impact on society and the reputation of the profession;
5. The responsibility for the coach to be aware of relevant legal requirements;
6. Preferably the responsibility of the coach to take out professional liability insurance.

5. Criteria for an independent complaints committee

1. There is a specification of important terms:
 - a. There is a definition of the term 'complaint' and clarity on what type of complaints the committee handles;
 - b. There is a definition of the term 'complainant', making it clear who can file a complaint.
2. There is clarity about the acting bodies:
 - a. There is a description of the task and role of the complaints committee;
 - b. It is clear by whom or what the complaints committee is appointed;
 - c. There is a description of the composition of the complaints committee. Think of number of members, alternate members in case of recusal, any specifically desired expertise, duration of appointment and rules regarding a possible extension;
 - d. There is a description of the powers of the complaints committee, which provides clarity on: ruling and/or advising and/or mediating and/or imposing sanctions, etc.

If present, these descriptions also apply to an Appeals Committee.

3. There is a clear procedure:
 - a. The procedure is laid down in a complaints regulation. This is public and easy to find on the website of the professional association;
 - b. The procedure provides clarity about:
 - i. The way in which a complaint can be submitted
 - ii. The procedural deadlines;
 - iii. The way in which the complaint is handled. It should be clear how confidentiality is guaranteed, whether or not there is a hearing on both sides, whether or not the complaint and outcome are published, and whether or not the name of the accused is made public;
 - iv. Any costs of the procedure.

If present, these descriptions should also be available for an Appeals Committee.

4. Judgment

There is a description of the possible outcomes of handling the complaint. Think of founded, unfounded, inadmissible and the possible sanctions the committee may impose.

5. Ensuring independence

The professional associations guarantee in the regulations that the complaints committee can operate independently at all times. This means at the very least that the professional association has no involvement whatsoever with the substantive handling of a complaint before, during or after its submission. It also means that the members of the complaints committee have no personal or business interest whatsoever in fulfilling their task as assessors of submitted complaints. (The independence criterion.) The chair of the committee has a legal background and comes from outside the professional association.

Prior to the appointment of the members of the complaints committee, the body responsible for appointing the members checks whether the (at that point) aspiring members meet the aforementioned independence criterion. Once the members have been appointed, each of them personally has the task and responsibility to test themselves against this independence criterion prior to, during or after handling a case entrusted to them. They must recuse themselves if they do not pass the test. The professional associations vouch for the integrity of this test by the appointed members.

6. Criteria for admission and (re)certification

The professional association has a procedure and professional standard by which a coach is assessed. The process is traceable and transparent and contains quantitative and qualitative elements. (Re)certification implies that the coach is transparent and verifiable and is assigned a level of performance by an independent peer or assessors. This gives the outside world certainty about the professionalism of the coach and their ongoing professional development.

1. The professional association is transparent about the criteria it uses for admission to the professional association as a professional coach:
 - a. This includes education, experience, and professional practice;
 - b. The (possible) timeframe within which a coach must be certified.
2. The professional organization is transparent about the criteria and the procedure that the professional organization applies for (re)certification. Transparency relates to:
 - a. A description of the process and the steps to be taken by the coach;
 - b. The (possible) levels of certification;
 - c. The required number of hours of coaching experience (per level);
 - d. The required education;
 - e. The amount of mandatory group coaching, or supervision and/or coaching per year;
 - f. The title that the coach may use after certification;
 - g. The competencies on which the coach is assessed. These should at least cover:
 - i. contracting;
 - ii. understanding, handling, and applying the (Ethical) Code of Conduct;



- iii. ongoing self-development of the coach;
 - iv. self-awareness of the coach, including through structured reflection;
 - v. focus on learning and development of the coachee;
 - vi. shaping the coaching relationship with mutual respect and trust;
 - vii. supporting the coachee's goals;
 - viii. the use of resources and techniques during coaching with a view to the coachee's learning process;
 - ix. the evaluation process with the coachee.
3. The professional organization is transparent about the criteria and the procedure that the professional organization applies for recertification. Transparency relates to:
- a. frequency of recertification;
 - b. mandatory amount of continuing education and/or activities for which CPD points are awarded;
 - c. any other quantitative or qualitative requirements.