

# Minimum Skills Requirements for MCC Credential

ICF believes that it has an obligation to support its member coaches in the growth of their skill set. Every Master Certified Coach (MCC) started as a beginner. They progressed through an intermediate level of skill, and became masterful, where the hallmark is complete evidence of the coach's role as learner about the client. ICF's three levels of Credentials reflect the continuum of growth and learning along the coaching journey.

This document has been created to support coaches as they prepare for the MCC credential performance evaluation. We also hope that this document will assist mentor coaches and supervisors in supporting these coaches, and coaching education and training providers in undertaking accreditation of their programs. The aim is to support coaches in successfully completing the MCC performance evaluation and in continuing to develop their skill set as coaches, in alignment with the updated ICF Core Competencies (2019).

For those seeking a credential, this document will provide an understanding of what assessors evaluate in relation to each ICF Core Competency. It will offer the minimum level of skill necessary to successfully demonstrate an MCC level of competency, and also help you understand what non-coaching behaviors might prevent successful completion of the MCC performance evaluation. This document can help each individual coach answer the following queries:

1. What does it mean to be an MCC coach?
2. What do ICF assessors listen for when they are evaluating my coaching?
3. As I progress on my coaching journey, what are my strengths and what are the skill set areas that I need to grow to pass the MCC performance evaluation?

Finally, ICF strongly believes that clients receive real and substantive value from MCC coaches. That value rests always in the coach's complete attention to the client and what the client wishes to accomplish, the complete level of partnership with the client, as well as the coach's complete support of the client's agenda. We honor each and every coach on their journey and look forward to supporting your path of growth as a coach and your credentialing path within ICF.

## Overall Behaviors for MCC-level Coaching

Among the hallmarks of MCC-level coaching is the fluidity and artistry with which a coach engages in a coaching conversation. This can manifest in a variety of ways. Most commonly, MCC-level coaching is demonstrated through the depth of skill in a specific

coaching behavior or through the integration of multiple competencies simultaneously in a seamlessly blended manner.

The structure of the Minimum Skills Requirements for MCC-level coaching is designed to reflect the unique characteristics of masterful coaching, with behaviors identified for each of the Core Competency areas, as well as overarching behaviors and skills that reflect MCC-level coaching across the competencies. Both the overall MCC-level coaching behaviors and the competency-specific skills have been identified through research with MCC-credentialed coaches.

At the MCC level of coaching, an applicant should demonstrate trust in the client as a full partner throughout the coaching engagement, supporting the client in directing the focus and approach of the session and exploring the client's learning in a way that supports their continued growth. An applicant should exhibit a genuine interest and curiosity in and support for the client as a whole person—beyond the client's situation or immediate goals—and should support the client in reflecting on their learning and discovery about themselves at a holistic level. The applicant should also demonstrate genuine trust in and respect for the client's choices, perceptions, insights and contributions throughout the coaching, engaging in the coaching as a supporter and active learner and encouraging the client to explore their learning and growth at a deep level.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following general coaching behaviors as part of the performance evaluation process:

- Coach invites the client to explore the lens through which the client is observing their current situation
- The coach's comments and questions come from the totality of what they have learned about who the client is and their coaching purpose
- Coach's invitations to the client primarily focus on exploring deeper learning or a path forward

## **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

**Important Note:** Familiarity with the ICF Code of Ethics and its application is required for all levels of coaching and the standard for demonstrating a strong ethical understanding of coaching is similar for an ICF Credential at any level – Associate Certified Coach (ACC), Professional Certified Coach (PCC) or Master Certified Coach (MCC).

An applicant must demonstrate alignment with the ICF Code of Ethics in the performance evaluation. An applicant who commits a clear violation of the ICF Code of Ethics within a performance evaluation recording would not pass this competency and would be denied a Credential.

An applicant must also remain consistently in the role of coach within the performance evaluation. This includes demonstrating a knowledge of the coaching conversation that is focused on inquiry and exploration, and a focus based on present and future issues. An applicant would not pass this competency if they focuses primarily on telling the client what to do or how to do it (consulting mode) or if the conversation is based primarily in the past, particularly the emotional past (therapeutic mode).

If an applicant is not clear on basic foundation exploration and evoking skills that underlie the ICF definition of coaching, that lack of clarity in skill use will be reflected in skill level demonstrated in some of the other competencies listed below. For example, if a coach almost exclusively gives advice or indicates that a particular answer chosen by the coach is what the client should do, trust and safety, presence, active listening, evoking awareness, and facilitating client growth will not be present and a credential at any level would be denied.

## 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

Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset serves as a foundational competency for coach practitioners, focused primarily on the “being” of the coach. The related behaviors are typically demonstrated across a coach's practice, more so than in any specific coaching session. This competency area is therefore more difficult to consistently assess within the performance evaluation process. As a result, there are no behavioral or skill statements in this Competency area that are used for assessment purposes. Rather, an applicant's knowledge of and ability to apply Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset is more directly evaluated in the ICF Credentialing written exam.

### **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

## **Key Skills Evaluated**

1. The clarity and depth in creating an agreement for the session
2. The coach's ability to partner and the depth of partnering with the client in the creation of agreement, measures of success, and issues to be addressed
3. The coach's ability to attend to the client's agenda throughout the session.

At an MCC level, the minimum standard of skill that must be demonstrated to achieve a passing score for Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements is that the coach fully explores with the client what the client wants to work on. The coach partners with the client to thoroughly explore the importance of the topic to the client, measures of success, and any changes in the direction of the coaching conversation. Through a partnering discussion, the coach ensures that both the coach and client are clear about the agenda, the measures of success, and the issues to be discussed, and the coach attends to that agenda and those measures throughout the coaching, unless redirected by the client. The coach regularly checks with the client throughout the session to ensure that the client's goals for the session are being achieved and that the direction and process are supporting the client in moving toward their desired outcome.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following skills within Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements as part of the performance evaluation process:

- Coach partners with the client to explore the topic or focus of the session at a level that is meaningful to the client
- Coach partners with the client to keep the desired outcome as a guide to the coaching conversation in a flexible, gentle and natural manner
- Coach notices subtle shifts in the conversation and invites the client to change direction if the client desires

A coach will not receive a passing score for Establishes and Maintains Agreements on the MCC performance evaluation if full partnership with the client is not demonstrated. Full partnership will not be demonstrated if the coach chooses the topic(s) for the client or if the coach does not coach around the topic(s) the client has chosen. The evaluation for this competency will also be negatively impacted if the coach does not explore the measures of success for each topic with the client to a degree that achieves clarity about the client's intent or direction for the session, does not allow the client full input into the issues that should be discussed relative to the client's stated objectives for the session, or does not check with the client about whether the client is moving toward what the client wanted from the session.

## 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

### Key Skills Evaluated

1. The coach's depth of connection to and support of the client
2. The coach's depth of trust in and respect for the client and the client's processes of thinking, creating
3. The coach's willingness to be open, authentic and vulnerable with the client to build mutual trust.

At an MCC level, the minimum standard of skill that must be demonstrated to receive a passing score for Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety with the client is that the coach demonstrates complete and open trust in the client and the process by engaging the client as an equal partner in the coaching, and by the coach's willingness

to be vulnerable with the client and creating a safe space for the client to be vulnerable in return.

The MCC level coach demonstrates a complete confidence in self, the coaching process, the client as a whole, and a genuine curiosity about and respect for the client's perceptions, learning style, and personal being. The client is treated as an equal partner in the relationship with a full invitation to participate in the development and creation of the coaching process and their own new learning and behaviors.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following skills within Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety as part of the performance evaluation process:

- Coach engages the client as an equal partner in a collaborative coaching process
- Coach exhibits genuine curiosity about the client as a whole person by inviting the client to share more about themselves or their identity
- Coach provides space for the client to fully express themselves, share feelings, beliefs, and perspectives, without judgment
- Coach acknowledges the client and celebrates client progress

A coach will not receive a passing score for Cultivates Trust and Safety on the MCC performance evaluation if the coach does not treat the client as a full partner, choosing not only the agenda but also participating in the creation of the coaching process itself. Lack of full partnership will be demonstrated if the coach exhibits an interest in the coach's view of the situation rather than the client's view, does not seek information from the client about the client's thinking, does not seek information about the client's goals, or the coach demonstrates a lack of interest in or disrespect toward the client as a whole. In addition, the evaluation will be negatively impacted if the coach does not invite the client to share their thinking on an equal level with the coach or if the coach chooses the direction and approach without significant input from the client. Any indication that the coach is teaching rather than coaching will also result in a score below the MCC level for this competency area.

## **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

### **Key Skills Evaluated**

1. The coach's depth of focus on and partnership with the client
2. The coach's depth of observation and use of the whole of the client in the coaching process
3. The coach's ability to create space for reflection and remain present to the client through both conversation and silence.

At an MCC level, the minimum standard of skill that must be demonstrated to receive a passing score for Competency 5: Maintains Presence is that the coach is fully partnering with the client in the coaching dialogue and is a connected observer to the client, holding both objective and emotional perspectives simultaneously. The connection is to the whole of the client, who the client is, what the client wants, how the client learns and creates, and how the client leads the coaching conversation. The coach evidences a genuine curiosity in the client. As with Cultivates Trust and Safety, the coach is in a complete partnership with the client where the client is an equal or greater contributor to the conversation and direction of the coaching than the coach. At the MCC level, the conversation between coach and client is equal and easy, even in uncomfortable moments.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following skills within Competency 5: Maintains Presence as part of the performance evaluation process:

- Coach responds to the client in a manner that keeps the conversation flowing with the client leading the way
- Coach remains curious and attentive to the client, exploring what the client needs throughout the session
- Coach engages in the coaching conversation with ease and fluidity
- Coach leverages silence to support the client and the client's growth

ICF notes that Cultivates Trust and Safety and Maintains Presence are quite related competencies. Therefore, a coach will not receive a passing score Competency 5: Maintains Presence with the client on the MCC performance evaluation if the coach does not treat the client as a full partner, choosing not only the agenda but also participating in the creation of the coaching process itself. Such lack of full partnership is demonstrated if the coach exhibits interest in the coach's view of the situation rather than the client's view, does not seek information from the client about the client's thinking, does not seek information about the client's goals, or if the coach's attention seems to be on the coach's own performance or demonstration of knowledge. In

addition, the evaluation will be negatively impacted if the coach does not invite the client to share their thinking on an equal level with the coach.

## 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

### Key Skills Evaluated

1. The coach's depth of attention to what the client communicates in relation to the client and the client's agenda
2. The coach's ability to hear on multiple levels, including both the emotional and substantive content of the words
3. The coach's ability to hear underlying beliefs, thinking, creating, and learning that are occurring for the client including recognizing incongruities in language, emotions, and actions
4. The coach's ability to hear and integrate the client's language and to invite the client to deeper exploration.

At an MCC level, the minimum standard of skill that must be demonstrated to receive a passing score for Competency 6: Listens Actively is that the coach listens as a learner and demonstrates an ability to listen at the logical and emotional level at the same time. Responses from the coach evidence learning about the client at multiple levels. The coach's responses evidence that the coach is hearing the client's intuitive abilities, the client's energy, when the client speaks of important things, when new growth is occurring for the client, how that growth is related to the client's stated objectives and

agenda, and when the client is finding, creating, and using a more powerful sense of self. The coach is also able to hear the client's current thinking and growth and relate it to the future the client is trying to create. An MCC level coach hears the totality of the client's greatness and gifts as well as limiting beliefs and patterns. The coach's listening is cumulative from session to session and throughout each individual session.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following skills within Competency 6: Listens Actively:

- Coach responds to client with an invitation into a deeper exploration of client thinking and behaviors
- Coach's responses to the client demonstrates an understanding of the client's emotions, energy, or learning and growth, in alignment with the client's agenda
- Coach reflects what the client communicates in relation to the context of the whole person

A coach will not receive a passing score for Listens Actively on the MCC performance evaluation if the coach does not demonstrate listening that is based on the whole client and an ability to hear the client's thinking, learning, and feeling at multiple levels. The coach will not receive a passing grade at this level if the listening is filtered only through the coach's methods of thinking, learning, and creating and does not actively hear and use as a significant coaching tool, the client's methods of thinking, learning, and creating. The score for this competency will also be negatively impacted if nuances of the client's language are not reflected in the coach's responses, or if the coach does not respond to what the client communicates, the coach's response is not related to what the client is trying to achieve, or the coach's listening is primarily focused on the client's problems or weaknesses. The coach will not receive a passing grade on the MCC performance evaluation if the coach appears to be listening for the place where the coach can demonstrate their knowledge about the topic or tell the client what to do about the topic.

## **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

### **Key Skills Evaluated**

1. The coach's use of inquiry, exploration, silence and other techniques that support the client in achieving new or deeper learning and awareness
2. The coach's ability to explore with and evoke exploration by the client of the emotional and substantive content of the words
3. The coach's ability to explore with and evoke exploration by the client of the underlying beliefs and means of thinking, creating, and learning that are occurring for the client
4. The coach's ability to support the client in exploring new or expanded perspectives or ways of thinking
5. The coach's invitation to and integration of the client's intuition, thinking, and language as critical tools in the coaching process.

At an MCC level, the minimum standard of skill that must be demonstrated to receive a passing score for Competency 7: Evokes Awareness is that the coach's invitation to the exploration of important issues precedes and is significantly greater than the invitation to a solution. At an MCC level, the coach's way of being is consistently curious; the coach is willing to not know and allow the exploration to evolve based on the client's thinking, learning, and creating. The coach asks mostly, if not always, direct, evocative questions that are fully responsive to the client in the moment, to the client's agenda and stated objectives, and that require significant thought by the client or take the client to a new place of thinking. The coach makes frequent and full use of the client's language and learning style to craft questions, insights, or observations that provide a space for a client to use and expand their own style of thinking, learning, and creating, and to discover their power, gifts, and strengths. The coach provides sufficient space and encouragement to allow the client to integrate and use new awareness to identify

patterns of thinking or behavior, resolve current challenges, achieve current goals, and think how the new awareness may be used in the future.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following skills within Competency 7: Evokes Awareness as part of the performance evaluation process:

- Coach partners with the client to explore the client's stories, metaphors and imagery that support growth and learning
- Coach stimulates new client insights with minimal, precise questions
- Coach asks questions that challenge the client to explore more deeply or to go beyond current thinking and feeling
- Coach shares with fluidity insights, observations, or questions, from the client's words and actions to foster awareness

A coach will not receive a passing score for Evokes Awareness on the MCC performance evaluation if the coach does not demonstrate an ability to use questions, insights, silence or other techniques that encourage the client to deepen their thinking in a larger, more reflective space related to the client or the client's agenda. The evaluation will be negatively impacted if the coach frequently asks questions that keep the client in the past or in present detail of a situation rather than in forward thinking, or if the coach drives the client toward solutions without fully exploring issues that may be important to gaining complete solution or accomplishment for the client. The evaluation will also be negatively impacted if the dialogue does not provide sufficient space for the client's full participation in creating awareness; if the coach's communication reflects an agenda or directing of any kind by the coach; if the coach does not evidence frequent use of the client's language, learning, thinking, and creating styles; or if the coach does not often create an easy place for the client to engage in deeper thinking, learning, and discovery. The coach will not receive a passing score for this competency area if the coach's communication limits the thinking and learning direction for the client without specific interaction with, discussion of, and assent by the client to the limitation.

## **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

### **Key Skills Evaluated**

1. The coach's ability to support the client in exploring their learning about themselves and their situation and the application of that learning to support the client's goals
2. The coach's ability to partner fully with the client in designing actions from their new awareness, which may include thinking, feeling or learning, that support the client in moving toward their stated agenda or goals
3. The coach's ability to support the client in developing measurable achievements that are steps toward the client's stated goals or outcomes
4. The coach's ability to partner with the client to explore and acknowledge the client's progress throughout the session
5. The coach's depth of partnership in closing the session.

At an MCC level, the minimum standard of skill that must be demonstrated to receive a passing score for Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth is that the coach fully partners with the client to explore the client's learning about their situation and themselves, and ways to apply new awareness to support the client's agenda, desired goals, and future growth. The coach partners with the client throughout the session to explore the client's progress and learning and supports the client in reflecting on what the client is discovering about themselves. The MCC coach demonstrates trust in the client to develop actions and accountability structures that are reflective of the client's agenda and broader learning or accomplishment that the client wants to obtain, integrate the client's strengths as well as the best of the client's learning and creating methodologies.

Specifically, MCC applicants are assessed on the following skills within Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth as part of the performance evaluation process:

- Coach checks in with client and their progress, learnings, and insights in natural and spontaneous ways throughout the session
- Coaches invites the client to sense and reflect on what they are learning about themselves
- Coach cultivates an environment for the client to intentionally apply their own learning

A coach will not receive a passing score for Facilitates Client Growth on the MCC performance evaluation if the coach does not invite full client participation or does not encourage client leadership in planning strategies, actions and methods of accountability or if the coach dominates in any way the actions or applications of learning that are created. The evaluation will also be negatively impacted if the coach does not invite or partner with the client to explore what the client is learning about themselves and possible applications of that learning, or if applications of learning do not reflect a clear potential for forward movement by the client related to the client's agenda, desired outcomes, or to some other learning that the client has defined for as necessary for their growth. The evaluation will also be negatively impacted if designed plans and goals and/or discussion designed actions involves only physical activity with no attention to the thinking, learning, being, and creativity structures of the client.

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