

MCC Minimum Skills Requirements



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The purpose of the MCC Minimum Skills Requirements is to outline the essential skills needed to demonstrate competency at the MCC level. The document follows the ICF Core Competencies and in each competency you will come across the following sections: Key Skills, Behaviors Consistent with ICF Standards, and Behaviors Inconsistent with ICF Standards.

Key Skills.

These are based on the ICF Core Competencies and represent the foundational coaching abilities relevant to each competency area, applicable across all credential levels.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Standards.

These sections describe the observable actions coaches should demonstrate that reflect effective coaching practice at the MCC level.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Standards.

These lists point to actions that may disrupt the coaching process or reduce the quality of the coaching experience, and that do not meet the standards for expected coaching skills at the MCC level. These are included to support coach development and alignment with ICF's professional standards.

Tip: For a deeper understanding, compare the MCC Minimum Skills Requirements alongside the ICF Core Competencies — seeing them side by side will give you valuable insights into how they align and help you elevate your coaching practice.

Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Familiarity with the ICF Code of Ethics and its application is required for all levels of coaching. You must demonstrate a strong understanding of ethical coaching practice to earn any level of ICF credential.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- Demonstrate a strong understanding and alignment with the ICF Code of Ethics.
- Consistently stay in the role of the coach, demonstrating knowledge of how to structure a coaching conversation and stay focused on future and present issues.
- Use key coaching skills such as trust, presence, active listening, and evoking awareness to facilitate the client's own insights.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach is in clear violation of the ICF Code of Ethics.
- The coach's focus is primarily on telling the client what to do or how to do it (consulting mode). Or if the conversation is based primarily on the past, particularly the emotional past (therapeutic mode).
- The coach primarily gives advice or tells the client what to do throughout the session.

Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Embodying a coaching mindset — a mindset that is open, curious, flexible, and client-centered — is a process that requires ongoing personal and professional learning and development as a coach. These elements take place over the course of a coach’s professional journey and cannot be fully captured in a single moment in time.

Your understanding of this competency is evaluated in the ICF Credentialing Exam.

Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 3: Establishes and Maintains Agreements are:

- The coach co-creates an agreement for the session.
- The coach partners with the client to define the components of the agreement.
- The coach continues in the direction of the client's desired outcome, unless the client indicates otherwise.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the MCC level under Competency 3 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach partners with the client to identify the focus of the session.
- Coach explores and clarifies several aspects of the topic.
- Coach confirms the mutual understanding of the client's desired session outcome.
- Coach notices possible shifts emerging in the conversation and clarifies the desired direction of the session with the client.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not partner with the client to support their full autonomy in creating the session agreement.
- The coach does not explore the desired outcome for the session to a degree that achieves clarity about the client's intent or direction for the session.
- The coach's responses are general and do not reflect the client's use of specific words and concepts in the formulation of the session agreement.
- The coach is unresponsive to possible shifts emerging and does not partner with the client to clarify the client's preference for either continuing in the same direction or shifting to a new or related direction that has emerged.
- The coach subtly or overtly influences the client's choice of how they use their session.

Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 4: Cultivates Trust and Safety are:

- The coach partners with the client to create a safe, supportive environment that encourages the client to share freely.
- The coach demonstrates trust in and respect for the client's unique ways of processing and creating.
- The coach is open and transparent to foster mutual trust.
- The coach acknowledges the client's unique contributions in the coaching process.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the MCC level under Competency 4 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach acknowledges the client's learning or growth at any moment in the session.
- Coach recognizes the client's emotions, strengths, or other unique characteristics.
- Coach seeks to understand the client by inviting the client to share more about themselves, their perspectives, or their identity.
- Coach demonstrates empathy for what the client has expressed.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach demonstrates significant interest in their own knowledge or view of the situation rather than exploring or prioritizing the client's perspective or knowledge.
- The coach does not seek information from the client about their thinking, feelings, perceptions, concerns, identity, or beliefs, or is unresponsive when such information is shared.
- The coach is unsupportive, dismissive, judgmental, or disrespectful toward the client.
- The coach's responses are general and are not customized to reflect the client's use of specific words, concepts, and ways of expressing themselves.
- Coach misses opportunities to acknowledge client progress, emerging insights, or unique contributions at any moment in the session.
- The coach's behavior reflects a lack of curiosity about the client's experience, and instead, the coach prioritizes their own interpretation of the client or their situation.

Competency 5: Maintains Presence

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 5: Maintains Presence are:

- The coach remains engaged and responsive to the client throughout the session.
- The coach remains curious and observant of the client.
- The coach intentionally provides space for reflection.
- The coach remains present through both conversation and silence.
- The coach partners with the client throughout the session.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the MCC level under Competency 5 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach responds holistically to the client in a manner that keeps the conversation flowing.
- Coach partners with the client in ways that support the client's needs.
- Coach consistently demonstrates curiosity.
- Coach creates space for silence, pause, or reflection.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not treat the client as an equal partner throughout the session.
- The coach uses a predefined approach rather than working with what emerges in real-time, in line with the client's flow and needs, including subtle or overt emotions.
- The coach speaks in a way that implies influence, judgment, or authority about the client or their topic, including teaching the client.
- The coach's responses are general and are not customized to reflect the client's use of specific words, concepts, and ways of expressing themselves.
- The coach does not work with the client as a person, limiting the conversation to only working with the client's situation.
- The coach interrupts or interjects instead of being present to how much space the client needs for their self-expression.

Competency 6: Listens Actively

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 6: Listens Actively are:

- The coach hears what the client is and is not communicating in relation to their agenda.
- The coach integrates the client's unique use of words into their questions and observations.
- The coach notices and inquires about the client's non-verbal cues and body language.
- The coach offers what they see, hear, feel, or sense and accepts the client's response.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the MCC level under Competency 6 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach recognizes the nuances of language, emotions, energy, or behaviors in relation to the client and the client's agenda.
- Coach's response demonstrates understanding of the client's thinking, feeling, or insight in the moment.
- Coach explores what the client communicates in relation to multiple dimensions of the client.

Behaviors Inconsistent with ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not demonstrate listening that is focused on and responsive to the client's verbal and non-verbal communication, including body language and emotional cues.
- The majority of the coach's responses, questions, and observations are general, instead of being customized to how or what the client is expressing about themselves and their situation.
- The coach's responses are focused more on solving the client's situation, ignoring insights and information the client shares about themselves.
- The coach appears to be listening for an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge about the topic or tell the client what to do about the topic.

Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 7: Evokes Awareness are:

- The coach uses questions, observations, silence, and other techniques to support the client in gaining insight into themselves and their topic.
- The coach shares personal responses—such as comments or intuition—without attachment or direction, in ways that may support the client’s insights or learning.
- The coach explores the client’s emotions, needs, underlying beliefs, and ways of thinking, creating, and learning.
- The coach invites the client to identify influences on their current and future thinking, behavior, or emotions.
- Coach adapts their approach to the client’s needs and style.
- The coach intentionally allows space for the client to fully respond.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the MCC level under Competency 7 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach partners with the client to explore and expand the client’s perspective.
- Coach shares insights, sensations, or observations that support the client in creating new or expanded awareness.
- Coach stimulates new client insights with succinct, open-ended questions, one at a time.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not consistently include or use the client’s specific words, concepts, and creating styles.
- The coach does not intentionally provide sufficient reflective space for the client’s full participation in exploring their emerging awareness.
- The coach drives the client toward solutions without hearing whether the client still needs to engage in deeper thinking, feeling, or sensing.
- The coach’s way of speaking is complex or confusing to the client.
- The coach does not demonstrate an ability to use questions, observations, insights, silence, or other techniques that encourage the client to deepen their thinking related to themselves as well as their agenda.

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- The coach does not make use of self to share personal responses, comments, or intuitions without attachment.

Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

Key Skills

The key coaching skills across all levels for Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth are:

- The coach partners with the client to explore their session progress and learning.
- The coach supports the client in considering how to integrate new awareness into their worldview and behaviors.
- The coach partners with the client to design actions that reflect new learning.
- The coach supports the client in identifying what they need to follow through with their designed actions.
- The coach partners with the client to close the session.

Behaviors Consistent With ICF Coaching Standards

The coaching skills demonstrated at the MCC level under Competency 8 are outlined in the behavioral statements below:

- Coach invites the client to reflect on what they have learned about themselves from the coaching conversation.
- Coach partners with the client to translate insights or learning into actions.
- Coach partners with the client to complete the session.

Behaviors Inconsistent With ICF Coaching Standards

- The coach does not support the client in identifying their session progress, learning, or how to apply new insights after the session.
- The coach misses opportunities to acknowledge the client's progress and learning as it emerges throughout the session.
- The coach does not partner with the client to ensure the client's designed actions contain sufficient elements that facilitate their implementation.
- The coach suggests or provides specific actions to the client, rather than partnering with the client to create their own actions and meaningful methods for implementation.
- The coach does not inquire about the relevance of the client's insights to other aspects of their work or life.
- The coach chooses the timing, or method, of closing the session



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