



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ON THE

CODE OF PRACTICE

FOR

REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGY

PRACTITIONERS IN COACHING

Society for Industrial & Organisational Psychology of South Africa's (SIOPSA)

Interest Group in Coaching & Consulting Psychology (IGCCP)

© Copyright 2016 SIOPSA's IGCCP. All rights reserved.

The Code of Practice and the Frequently Asked Questions documents were compiled by the Interest Group in Coaching & Consulting Psychology, South Africa (IGCCP), an interest group of the Society for Industrial & Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA). It aims to provide direction on ethics and coaching practice to registered psychology practitioners who coach.

Please reference this document as:

Interest Group of Coaching and Consulting Psychology (IGCCP). (2016). FAQ for *Code of Practice for Registered Psychology Practitioners in Coaching*. Publication of the Society of Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa: www.siopsa.org.za.

For further information regarding SIOPSA or IGCCP please contact the Administration Office of SIOPSA:

0860 SIOPSA (746772)
Cell: 087 820 4516
Fax: 086 558 4097
Email: info@siopsa.org.za

Postal Address:

PO BOX 577
Fontainebleau
2032

Physical Address:

Regus 43 Birchwood Court
Montrose Street
Vorna Valley
Midrand
Johannesburg 1686

The Code of Practice has been through a process of development and design, from the 2014 publication on the SIOPSA website.

During 2014, the IGCCP sent the Code to all members via SIOPSA's newsletter format, asking for comment from SIOPSA members on the concept and content of the Code.

The IGCCP received a very good response with many well placed questions about the Code, the reasoning, as well as the context (in the coaching and psychology professions) and purpose of the Code. The IGCCP gathered all the questions and streamlined them into this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. Questions have been answered and positioned given the current knowledge of the field of Coaching Psychology both nationally and internationally.

Comments on the Code and further questions about the Code are welcomed and encouraged. Please email igccpsa@siopsa.org.za. Comment, edits and additions will be considered and integrated either into the Code or added as further FAQ's.

August 2016

Table of Contents

1. SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE FIT WITH COACHING	5
2. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ‘REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGY PRACTITIONER IN COACHING’ AND ‘COACHING PRACTITIONER’	5
3. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COACHING, COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY	6
4. CONSEQUENCE OF NOT ADHERING TO THE ‘CODE’	7
5. HOW IS A PSYCHOLOGIST WHO COACHES DIFFERENT FROM A COACH WHO IS NOT A PSYCHOLOGIST?	8
6. QUALIFYING AS A PSYCHOLOGIST WHO COACHES IN SOUTH AFRICA	9
7. COACHING PROGRAMMES	9
8. WHAT MAKES THE ‘CODE’ UNIQUE?	9
9. FREEDOM OF AFFILIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS.....	10
10. THE NATURE OF THE CODE	10
11. APPLICATION OF THE ‘CODE’	10
12. DEALING WITH ‘POOR’ PRACTICE	11
13. COACHING AND SUPERVISION.....	11
14. COACHING FEES	12
15. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY	13
16. THE LIST OF PRACTITIONERS WHO COACH.....	14

1. SCOPE OF PRACTICE OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE FIT WITH COACHING

Question

Does coaching form part of the scope of practice of any of the registration categories for psychologists with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (the HPCSA)?

Response

Coaching psychology is not a separate registration category, however given the regulations defining the scope of the profession of psychology this could potentially form part of the scope of practice of any of the registration categories as set out in the Health Professions Act 56 of 1974. In this regard the Board of Psychology acknowledges that all practitioners of the profession of psychology are competent to perform psychological acts within the ambit of competencies prescribed by their registration categories.

This *Code of Practice for Registered Psychology Practitioners in Coaching* (hereafter referred to as the 'Code') is only aimed at coaches who are registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (the HPCSA) in one of the following registration categories: clinical, counselling, educational, industrial-organisational, research and any other category introduced by the Board.

2. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGY PRACTITIONER IN COACHING' AND 'COACHING PRACTITIONER'

Question

What is the difference between a *registered Psychology Practitioner in coaching* (a psychologist who coaches) and a *coaching practitioner* (a coach) who is not a psychologist?

Response

The *in coaching* (a psychologist who coaches) is a professional who is registered with the HPCSA as per the registration categories mentioned above (Regulations Defining the Scope of the Profession of Psychology, R. 704, 2 September 2011).

A practitioner/a coach who is not a psychologist, is not registered with the HPCSA in one of the recognised registration categories.

3. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COACHING, COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Question

What is the difference between coaching, counselling and psychotherapy?

Response

The debate on the differences and similarities between coaching, counselling and psychotherapy is not new and still trending in discussions and research. This document does not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of the status quo, but simply states the point of departure assumed in developing the 'Code' that is based on the current working definition of coaching psychology: that the focus is on 'the absence of clinically significant mental health issues'. A good source for reference here is Bachkirova, T., 'The role of coaching psychology in defining boundaries between counselling and coaching', in Handbook of Coaching Psychology: A guide for practitioners. 2008. Palmer, S & Whybrow, A (Eds).

The Higher Education Qualification Framework in South Africa (HEQF) provides the following rationale for the different Masters Degrees studies in Psychology:

MA in Industrial and Organisational Psychology: "The qualification is aimed at producing competent, ethical and professional practitioners who will meet the needs of South Africa to provide psychological services in order to understand, modify, enhance individual, group and organizational behaviour, well-being and effectiveness within the context of work."

MA in Counselling Psychology: "The qualification is aimed at producing competent, ethical and professional practitioners who will meet the needs of South Africa to provide psychological services thereby enhancing and promoting psychological well-being of the public. This qualification is critical in providing good quality psychological services to people at various developmental stages and in a variety of settings in order to enhance optimum psychological functioning and wellbeing."

MA in Clinical Psychology: "The qualification is aimed at producing competent, ethical and professional practitioners who will meet the needs of South Africa to provide psychological services thereby enhancing and promoting psychological well-being of the public. This

qualification is critical in providing good quality psychological care at primary, secondary and tertiary health care levels in a variety of settings.”

Earlier research made much of the fact that the primary foci of counselling and psychotherapy is on remediating dysfunction or distress. As opposed to coaching, which is aimed at enhancing personal and professional growth and development of clients in personal and work domains, and not directly on treating dysfunction or distress.

However, there is now a growing body of evidence that suggests that coaching clients may present with mental health issues and abnormal levels of distress.

Yet, most definitions recognise that the primary focus of coaching psychology is the facilitation of goal attainment for the purpose of personal and professional development and the enhancement of wellbeing, rather than the treatment of mental illness. At the same time, it is recognised that some coaching clients may present with mental distress but that it is not the aim of coaching psychology to treat such problems.

It is therefore recommendable that coaches do have an understanding of psychology to be able to identify mental illness and personality disorders. This will allow them to refer coaching clients who present these issues for appropriate treatment by counselling or clinical psychologists. There are psychologists who coach who are adequately educated and competent to conduct psychotherapeutic interventions and may therefore be faced with a decision to treat mental illness with their coaching clients. However as per the definition of coaching psychology as set out in the ‘Code’, they are then not in the role as a coach, and it is perhaps more accurate to describe what they are doing as counselling or therapy – this then should be contracted separately with the client. It is recommended therefore that psychology practitioners take care not to enter into potentially conflicting professional roles (Ethical Rule of Conduct, HPCSA, Form 223).

4. CONSEQUENCE OF NOT ADHERING TO THE ‘CODE’

Question

What happens when the Psychology Practitioner in coaching is not adhering to the ‘Code’?

Response

The primary objective of the ‘Code’ is to ensure that Registered Practitioners who practice as coaches conduct their services appropriately, professionally and ethically, with due regard to the needs and

the rights of those involved in the coaching process, the purpose of the coaching, and the broader context in which the coaching takes place. The 'Code' is therefore seen to be supportive rather than constraining and considered as leading practice to which practitioners adhere to on a voluntary basis. The fact that the 'Code' is applicable to Registered Practitioners, means the normal rules and regulations of the profession applies. A registered practitioner is therefore fully accountable for professional actions in all areas of professional practice. Should a registered practitioner who is coaching, transgress on any of the prescribed codes and regulations of the Health Professions Act (No 56 of 1974), the HPCSA, the Professional Board of Psychology, and any other relevant bodies, such a practitioner may be held accountable under the disciplinary code of that relevant body.

5. HOW IS A PSYCHOLOGIST WHO COACHES DIFFERENT FROM A COACH WHO IS NOT A PSYCHOLOGIST?

Question

Are psychology practitioners who coach better than coaches who are not psychologists?

Response

This 'Code' is not meant to imply that psychology practitioners who coach are better than coaches who are not psychologists. It is meant to delineate a scope of practice and defines a scope of competence that applies to psychology practitioners who coach. The 'Code of Practice' thus highlights a standard of practice and indicates accountability. It is also to some extent a guideline document which is aspirational and intends to facilitate the continued systematic development of coaching practice, and aims to ensure a high level of professional practice.

The client is protected if a practitioner is registered with a regulatory body, in that they have recourse if they feel that they have received poor or incompetent practice. Psychology Practitioners are registered with the HPCSA, the official regulatory body for health professionals in South Africa. The 'Code' takes cognisance of all the regulatory guidelines prescribed by the HPCSA and the Health Professions Act (No 56 of 1974). The 'Code' provides a roadmap to those psychologists who coach, on how to navigate sensitively within the boundaries of the practice and ethical guidelines in South Africa.

An aggrieved party can approach the HPCSA and lay a complaint against the registered practitioner whom they have engaged with on any matter pertaining to their professional relationship. The HPCSA will then institute the necessary disciplinary procedures to investigate the complaint.

6. QUALIFYING AS A PSYCHOLOGIST WHO COACHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Question

How do you qualify as a Psychology Practitioner who coaches in South Africa?

Response

In order to register in any category of registration with the HPCSA the following is required: (i) a psychology qualification for the specific level of registration completed with an accredited University programme; (ii) completed an approved supervised internship; and (iii) passed the national board examination. A registered practitioner is then empowered to perform psychological acts within the scope of practice of the specific registration category. Within the ambit of the Ethical Code of Conduct, Registered Practitioners must limit their practice within their boundaries of competence, formal education and training, supervised and/or appropriate professional experience. It is therefore strongly recommended that the practitioner consider specific education and training in coaching. Most of the SA Masters in Psychology Programmes nowadays include a coaching module in their curriculums.

7. COACHING PROGRAMMES

Question

Is the 'Code' aligned to particular training in coaching programmes, courses or certificates?

Response

No, the 'Code' is not aligned to any particular training in coaching. It is up to the individual psychologist to explore and consider the credibility and standards of the available training offerings in coaching and to make their own decisions.

8. WHAT MAKES THE 'CODE' UNIQUE?

Question

Is there any relationship between this 'Code' and other bodies such as the ICF and COMENSA?

Response

The 'Code' is an initiative of the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa's (SIOPSA) Interest Group in Coaching and Consulting Psychology (IGCCP). At the present time, SIOPSA, the IGCCP and this 'Code', are only affiliated to coaching bodies where membership is based on a qualification in psychology and proven coaching competence. At an international level, there are a number of Memoranda of Understanding in place between the IGCCP and countries that have formed interest groups aligned to the International Society for Coaching Psychology (ISCP). For more information see the IGCCP's link on the SIOPSA website www.siopsa.org.za.

9. FREEDOM OF AFFILIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS

Question

May a psychologist who is registered with the HPCSA become a member of other coaching bodies?

Response

There is nothing preventing a psychologist who is registered with the HPCSA and who coaches, from becoming a member of other coaching bodies and to abide by their guidelines.

10. THE NATURE OF THE CODE

Question

What is the possibility that the 'Code' can stifle or over-regulate the scope of practice for psychologists in South Africa?

Response

The 'Code' is a guideline document, it is aspirational in nature. It is not a legislative document in that it does not set out enforceable rules that can lead to disciplinary action if not followed. Yet, it is important to emphasise that an aggrieved party to a coaching process may approach the HPCSA and lay a complaint against a practitioner who is registered with the HPCSA.

11. APPLICATION OF THE 'CODE'

Question

Can the 'Code' benefit coaches who are not registered psychologists?

Response

The aspirational nature of the 'Code' for Registered Practitioners who coach may also benefit coaching practitioners who are not registered psychologists, as it sets out *best practice for coaching* within a specific framework.

However, it is recommended that such practitioners should familiarise themselves and follow the guidelines of the coaching bodies to which they are affiliated.

12. DEALING WITH 'POOR' PRACTICE

Question

What is the recourse for a coachee or client who feels aggrieved and wants to report a practitioner for 'poor' practice?

Response

Registered practitioners who coach will observe and comply with the Laws of the South African Government and the other jurisdictions in which they practise, (e.g., the HPCSA).

Complaints and grievances about a breach in the conduct of a registered practitioner should be directed to the HPCSA. Any breach of the various rules, regulations and procedures of the HPCSA will be investigated and disciplined under the rules of the HPCSA, by virtue of the registered practitioner's membership and registration status with this profession controlling body (Clause 6.3 (c) of the Code).

It is important to point out that the 'Code' is aspirational in nature and aims to ensure that Registered Practitioners who coach conduct their services appropriately, professionally and ethically, and within the scope of their competence. The Code is not a legal enforceable document.

Therefore, behaviour not aligned to the 'Code' will not be remedied as in breach of the 'Code' itself. A grievance or complaint should be directed to the HPCSA in as far as the 'breach' or conduct of the registered practitioner is a breach of the various rules, regulations and procedures of the HPCSA.

13. COACHING AND SUPERVISION

Question

Psychologists can practice without supervision, so why then is there so much emphasis on supervision in the 'Code'?

Response

Psychologists and registered Psychology Practitioners in coaching have an ethical responsibility to ensure that they are competent and remain proficient in their practice. This means that they have to take steps to keep informed of scientific, legislative and professional developments in their field, and to comply with any requirements laid down by their profession for continuing professional education (clause (4) of the 'Code'). Registered practitioners have to adhere to the regulations published by the HPCSA on Continued Professional Development (CPD) by accruing a minimum of 30 Continuous Education Units (CEUs) per annum, as a means to ensure that they remain competent.

Supervision is not a regulatory requirement by the HPCSA for registered psychologists. Yet, it offers an additional formal process whereby the registered Psychology Practitioner in coaching can ensure their continuing professional development and effectiveness. For coaching in the organisational setting, supervision is also applied to ensure quality standards are adhered to where there may be different coaches operating from qualitatively different frameworks, approaches and knowledge bases.

Ethical practice requires the registered Psychology Practitioner to reflect on their scope of competence and ethical behaviour, and this, in essence, is self-monitored. The IGCCP supports a scientist-practitioner model, meaning, an adequate and effective understanding of the body of knowledge on which practice is based, and then applying this in practice. A focus on continuous learning and development is essential, and may take many different forms as is relevant for the practitioner. Thus a supervision process is highly recommended, as it provides a vehicle for the registered practitioner to continue their learning process of self-care, through their reflecting on practice and technical learning, in a supportive professional relationship.

14. COACHING FEES

Question

Are there any guidelines for the coach regarding fees and medical-aid contributions?

Response

The first legal-ethical step regulating the coaching relationship is when the registered practitioner and the coachee enter into a voluntary contract setting out what the coachee can expect from the relationship. The contract will stipulate the coaching fee and the expected costs of interventions such as assessment (see clause (6.1.1) of the 'Code').

The 'Code' does not provide guidelines on fees and fee structuring. Practitioners will structure their fees according to their scope of practice with the HPCSA, their education and training, their competence, their depth of experience and the market demand and need.

Registered practitioners will also take into consideration restrictions relating to their registration category with the HPCSA, and medical-aid provisions when considering medical aid claims.

Adherence to the 'Code' and application for inclusion in the *List of Psychology Practitioners* does not entitle a registered Psychology Practitioner in coaching to additional fee benefits with medical aid claims.

15. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Question

What is the importance of confidentiality in the coaching relationship and how should it be dealt with?

Response

Confidentiality is of utmost importance for all parties involved in the coaching relationship and is embedded in the ethical behaviour and the striving to adhere to good practices when coaching. These aspects are comprehensively dealt with in clauses 5 and 6 of the 'Code'. Clauses 6.3 (d), (e), (f), (g), (h) and (j) of the 'Code' also deal explicitly with confidentiality.

In essence, the registered Psychology Practitioner will, at all times, keep the best interest of the coachee in mind by respecting the privacy and confidentiality of the coachee, and will not disclose information pertaining to the coachee to any other party without the express consent of the coachee.

Maintaining confidentiality extends to all stakeholders that may form part of the coaching relationship, such as a paying client, a sponsoring organisation or family members. Making information about the coaching process or the coachee available to these parties also requires specific permission from the coachee. The provision of feedback on progress of coaching should be clearly contracted with all stakeholders involved and included in the coaching agreement.

The registered Psychology Practitioner has a further responsibility to respect matters of commercial confidentiality of a client or a sponsoring organisation.

Disclosing confidential information about a coachee is also provided for in Law, and Registered Practitioners must familiarise themselves with the relevant legislation and ethical principles in this regard. A good source that deals with this topic is the handbook written by Alfred Allan, 'Law and Ethics in Psychology an International Perspective', Inter-Ed Publishers, 2011.

16. THE LIST OF PRACTITIONERS WHO COACH

Question

What is the role of the *List of Practitioners* and how does it work?

Response

The *List of Practitioners* aims to provide recognition for Registered Practitioners practising in the field of Coaching Psychology and is aligned to the 'Code'. This List aims to ensure that Registered Practitioners conduct their services appropriately, professionally and ethically, with due regard to the needs and rights of those involved in the coaching process, the purpose for the coaching, and the broader context in which the coaching takes place.

The criteria for participation and the proposed administration process are listed in Appendix D of the 'Code'.