

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

The following questions and answers are included to support you in better understanding the credentialing program, and your success with the application and evaluation process. The answers provided do not replace the specific requirements included in the application. If you perceive a conflict or lack of clarity, review the application for clarification.

Key acronyms:

- PCC = Professional Certified Coach
- MCC = Master Certified Coach
- ACTP = Accredited Coach Training Program
- ARC = Application Review Committee

1. What is the purpose of the ICF coach-credentialing program?

The purpose is to:

- a. Strengthen the coaching profession and build a solid foundation of proactive self-regulation.
- b. Establish industry regulations and minimum standards for professional coaches and coach training programs.
- c. Assure the public that participating professional coaches and coach training programs meet or exceed, and operate in accordance with established industry standards.

2. What is the advantage in being certified by ICF and why should one seek such a credential?

This is a completely optional process. We estimate that there are currently about 16,000 part-time and full-time coaches worldwide. Coaching has been written about in Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, Money, USA Today, Fast Company, New Age Journal, Industry Week, Inc., the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, Management Review, Kiplinger's Personal Finance, Men's Health, Bloomberg Personal, Newsday, etc. It was also featured on CNN's "Impact" December 27, 1997, April 19, 1998, and April 20, 1998.

With the high level of international media coverage being experienced by the coaching profession, the public is being educated and will become more aware of the importance in scrutinizing a potential coach's qualifications. At the same time, the ICF MCC / PCC credentials are already becoming the benchmark for delineating the qualified from the unqualified. Many coaches who have been credentialed are charging higher fees, so there can also be a direct monetary gain. The credibility and value of an ICF credential and field support of such credentials will not be established by ICF but by the public, the clients of credentialed coaches, the media, and the field itself.

Note: Only seek an ICF credentialed status if you agree and align with the ICF philosophy and definition of coaching, both in principle and in practice.

3. What are the certification requirements?

For Professional Certified Coach (PCC):

- completed 750 client coaching hours
- provide 5 coaching references

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

- meet all requirements listed in the application (including 125 hours of coach specific training)
- pass a written and oral examination
- be coached 10 hours over a minimum of 3 months (by phone or 'live') by an ICF-credentialed coach

For Master Certified Coach (MCC):

- complete 2500 client coaching hours
- provide 10 coaching references
- meet all requirements listed in the application (including 200 hours of coach-specific training)
- pass a written and oral examination (Waived if already successfully completed for PCC during ICF Grandfathering process).
- provide validated documentation of professional contribution to the coaching profession

4. Can you give more explanation for the 750 hours of experience as a coach for the PCC credential and the 2500 hours for the MCC credential?

The ICF defines a client coaching hour as 60 minutes of actual time spent coaching a client. The client must have hired you as a coach. We require coaching hours because the ICF seeks experienced coaches to credential. When a coach applies for an ICF credential, we expect that they have invested themselves in formal coach-specific training, have learned the basic core competencies of today's coaching profession, and have been significantly engaged in the "coaching business" long enough to be sufficiently experienced in working directly with clients -- and that these clients identify themselves as coaching clients. So, we're looking for people who have COACHED for the numbers of hours indicated -- We are not looking for coaches who have been calling themselves a coach and not been actively engaged as a coach.

5. Does “group” coaching count towards the 750 or 2500 hours? If it does, how does it count?

Yes, you may count “group” coaching towards the client coaching experience requirement. One hour of group coaching counts as a single client coaching hour. Thus, for example if you coach a group of ten people for one hour it counts as one coaching hour not ten hours.

6. How do I apply and what do I attach?

The ICF will open credentialing twice a year. At those times, you can download an application for the credential you are applying for from the ICF web site. The directions with the application will tell you what if anything you need to attach. While it is important that you fully document your experiences, do not over document. Do not include books, or bound documents, or extraneous materials. The inclusion of such documents may result in a returned application, or at the very least considerably inhibit the evaluation process.

7. Which Certified Coach Application is best for me?

Professional Certified Coach (PCC) Credential Application: Accredited Coach Training Program Graduate Applicant: This application is only for those candidates who are applying for PCC and have graduated from an Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) after the effective date of program's accreditation.

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

Professional Certified Coach (PCC) Credential Application: Portfolio Applicant: This application is for those candidates who are applying for PCC and have NOT graduated from an Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) or graduated from an ACTP before the effective date of their program's accreditation.

Master Certified Coach (MCC) Credential Application: Current PCC or Accredited Coach Training Program Graduate Applicant: This application is for those candidates who are applying for MCC and who hold a current Professional Certified Coach credential or who have graduated from an Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) after the effective date of the program's accreditation.

Master Certified Coach (MCC) Credential Application: Portfolio Applicant: This application is only for those candidates who are applying for MCC and have NOT graduated from an Accredited Coach Training program (ACTP) or graduated from an ACTP before the effective date of their program's accreditation. If you are an ACTP graduate or you currently hold a PCC credential, you should use the MCC/PCC and ACTP graduate application instead.

Download your choice of [PCC](#) or [MCC](#) applications here.

8. Do applicants need to provide detailed descriptions of their coursework if they have attended a well-known coach-training program - or - will the ICF automatically be familiar with curricula of programs?

If you are applying as the graduate of an Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) you will not need to describe your coursework. If you are not a graduate of an ACTP and are applying as a Portfolio candidate, you will need to describe your coursework. Be descriptive and specific about your coursework. Include a sentence or brief paragraph of detail for each course or training. The application requires inclusion of the number of hours of instruction, instructor or trainer, how your coursework teaches the ICF Core Competencies, and start-end dates.

Total the training hours received and the coaching hours delivered. Display this in such a way it is obvious to the evaluators.

9. How does the change in the ICF requirement for the number hours of direct interaction affect my application if at all?

The coach specific training requirement of a minimum of 60 hours of direct interaction (in-person or on the phone) with program trainer has changed. As of January 1, 2002, this requirement becomes a minimum of 100 hours of direct interaction with program trainer. Therefore all applications for an ICF credential must reflect 100 hours of direct interaction with program trainer(s) for the credentialing session beginning November 12, 2001. It is the responsibility of all applicants to make sure their coach specific training meets and/or exceeds these changes in the required hours.

10. Can Group Coaching Count Toward the Mentoring Requirement of 10 Hours?

Yes, group coaching may count towards the mentoring requirement of 10 hours within the framework described. No more than 30% of the required mentoring hours (that is 3 hours) can come from group coaching. Additionally, the group being mentored may not consist of more than 7 participants and the group must have been specifically marketed as a mentor-coaching group at the time of sign up.

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

11. Can professional work that has resembled coaching be used for the coaching hour requirements?

No. ICF has researched (exhaustively) across the field and brought forward an independent credentialing process at this time to help distinguish:

- a) coaching from other fields and industries
- b) coaching exchanges and relationships from various other types of client-relationships.

ICF acknowledges that ALL life; educational and professional endeavors helped prepare every coach to coach. At the same time, this cannot be generically applied in fulfilling the coaching requirements within the ICF credentialing process. Coaching is a distinct and different profession from the following including but not limited to:

consulting
therapy
counseling
ministering
training
teaching as in educational settings
professionally presenting/speaking
leading (as in CEO, VP, etc.) and managing
department management and directing
overseeing/supervising

At the same time, ICF realizes much of what many applicants do and deliver professionally is and has often been very coach-like and a high-quality endeavor. But, a minister who regularly uses certain well-established coaching tools is still a minister and not a coach.

Conclusion: Coaching is a distinct field AND we want to be inclusive in finding and credentialing qualified coaches. Help us identify and acknowledge you by clearly establishing in your application process what you have done as a coach as distinct from what else you have done professionally.

12. How does the examination work for Portfolio applicants?

Applicants who have not graduated from an ICF Accredited Coach Training Program (ACTP) are required to take a written and oral examination to determine their understanding/comprehension of the core competencies and to demonstrate their coaching skills.

The examination is the final step in the Portfolio application review process. Here is an overview of the process for evaluating PCC or MCC Portfolio applications:

1. Applicant completes application, fulfilling requirements and submits to ICF with clear documentation
2. ICF Staff will review the application to ensure all elements have been addressed by the applicant
3. ARC will evaluate/rate the information provided to validate the applicant's fulfillment of requirements

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

There are three possible outcomes:

- a) Approval
- b) Denial
- c) Request for more information

If the applicant passes the initial review, he/she will be scheduled for the exam process. The ICF administered exam is comprised of two parts; the written portion which will be taken first; and the oral portion which will be administered second. More specific information regarding the examination process will be provided to the applicant at the time of notification that they are eligible to take the exam. In the event the applicant fails the ICF administered exam, the applicant may take the exam again during the next credentialing period.

13. What about the issue of confidentiality in disclosing the contact information of clients as references?

It is the experience of ICF that coaching clients, when asked, will be willing, and in fact it is reported to us that they are eager to serve as a readily accessible reference for their coaches. List clients who have affirmed that they are available as a reference.

Note: The ICF credentialing process is 100% optional. ICF realizes coaches with sufficient confidentiality concerns may opt not to apply in order to honor their considerations.

14. What about other therapy, counseling, social work, or some other form of helping or ministry or other services delivered under reimbursable programs or plans that require(d) labeling as other than coaching but were in the applicant's opinion actually coaching?

As noted in number 11 above, none of this can count as client hours toward your coaching credential.

15. What is Coach Specific Training and do personal development courses within entities such as Forum, Landmark, Lifespring, Life Training, Science of the Mind, and other personal or spiritual development or religious groups be counted in the ICF credentialing process?

Coach Specific Training as defined by the ICF is training predominantly marketed as teaching coaching skills and not something else and where the major emphasis is on coaching skills or applying technical skills as a coach and in a manner consistent with the ICF core competencies. The applicant must demonstrate that they have had coach specific training.

Other training, such as that listed in question 15, generally does not meet this definition, and is not considered coach specific training. It may be listed on the application in the background information section.

16. Can we count all that time on staff as an executive, director or manager/department head with a corporation when we now realize part of what we actually did with our employees or departments was coaching?

No, this is similar to question # 11 and the similar questions. Unless the client hires you as a coach these hours may not count as client coaching hours towards PCC MCC requirement.

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

17. Why can non-ICF members apply for ICF-credentialing?

ICF has designed the credentialing program an inclusive process without a membership requirement.

Note: By signing the application — any applicant, member or non-member, reassures ICF, the public and the field that if credentialed, they publicly state they are aligned with ICF's Ethical Guidelines, Standards of Conduct, Philosophy and Definition of coaching, and agree to abide with all the requirements of an ICF credentialed coach.

18. If an applicant is denied, when can they re-apply? What about the application fee?

If an applicant is denied, and firmly believes his/her experience/qualifications fulfill all requirements, the applicant may re-apply, with additional documentation to more fully communicate/validate this belief, during the next credentialing opening. The application fee will be re-assessed. Applicants will be told generally what it is about their application that is insufficient. We encourage the applicant to use this time between credentialing openings to resolve those areas where their application is weak.

19. What documentation do I need to validate that I am a graduate of an ACTP program?

Attach documentation FROM YOUR ACCREDITED COACH TRAINING PROGRAM that states the name of the program, that you have completed all the requirements of the program, that you have graduated, and that you completed the requirements and graduated after the effective date of the program's accreditation. This documentation must come from your ACTP; a statement from you that you have graduated from an ACTP is not sufficient.

20. What is the process if you have been awarded a PCC credential and you want to upgrade this to an MCC credential? What is the fee for this also?

When credentialing is open, download an MCC Current PCC or Accredited Coach Training Graduate Application from the ICF web site and complete the application. You must include proof of your PCC credential, e.g., copy of certificate or PCC number and date received. You will pay the normal MCC application fee.

21. How does a PCC renew and how does an MCC renew and when is this necessary?

The credential is valid as issued for 3 full years. Renewal will be based on the coach staying up to date and continuing to enhance and expand skills and capabilities as a coach. Attending coach-specific conferences is one way that will apply toward renewal credits. Attendance at the ICF Annual Conference and the Pre-Conference Workshops each year will more than satisfy the Continuing Education Requirements. Taking additional qualifying training from other sources is another way to achieve the required number of units. Since the priority was to first establish the credentials -- ICF has focused on this first. However, information about renewing your credential is now available on the ICF web site (www.coachfederation.org/recert.html).

22. Do ICF Credentialing requirements ever change?

International Coach Federation

FAQ's About the ICF Professional and Master Certified Coach (PCC & MCC) Credentialing Program

Yes. The ICF has the right to change the requirements for any credential at any time. In general, most changes are announced in advanced. Immediate changes, however, sometimes occur. An applicant must meet current ICF requirements for the credential in which they are applying.