ACC BARS
Resource Guide

rev. 11.18.2025

ACC BARS (Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale) Resource Guide

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to the **ICF BARS Review Executive Committee** for their thoughtful, steadfast work over two years to review and revise the ACC Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS), incorporating input from ICF Portfolio assessors to ensure these tools are clear, meaningful, and effective. These criteria articulate the essential behaviors and skills for effective coaching at the ACC level, offering assessors, mentor coaches and educators reliable tools to evaluate and support coaches in their development.

Special thanks as well to the **ACC BARS Resource Guide Working Group** for bringing the criteria and rating scale to life through this resource, designed to support assessors, educators, and mentor coaches in evaluating coaching skills with consistency and fairness.

We also appreciate the contributions of **ICF Portfolio assessors** whose feedback helped shape and refine these important tools.

This achievement reflects the collaborative spirit and global diversity of volunteer leaders, who demonstrate ICF's commitment to excellence in coaching.

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Introduction

The Associate Certified Coach (ACC) BARS Resource Guide was created to support evaluators, including evaluators, educators, and mentor coaches, in understanding that the ACC Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) are designed to support the evaluation of coaching skills at the ACC . This guide provides detailed explanations for each behavioral statement that reflects an ACC-level coaching skill, along with descriptions of the five available rating options.

At the ACC level, evaluators are rating candidates according to the ACC coaching standards.

The ACC is for coaches looking to evidence their foundational coaching skills, knowledge, and competence.

ACC coaches demonstrate fundamental knowledge of the ICF Core Competencies, the ICF Code of Ethics, and the definition of coaching. The ACC is designed to align coaches early in their coaching career and professionals who understand the value of integrating a professional ICF coaching approach.

Within this guide, you will find a section for each competency with its definition and behavioral statements. The behavioral statements for Competencies 3 – 8 are further accompanied by what meets the standard for the specified statement, additional descriptions and explanations, and how to apply it to the rating scale options.

ICF created this guide to serve evaluators with the goal of upholding the ICF credential as the gold standard for the coaching profession.

NOTE: This guide is only for coaches who hold an ACC Credential or higher. This guide is not to be shared with those applying for an ACC Credential. It will be provided in the ICF ACC BARS Training and available for those in the Coaching Education Assessor Community.

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General Assessment Principles and Guidelines

This section provides general assessment principles and guidelines that apply to the evaluation of all behavioral statements and should be followed every time you evaluate a recording or coaching session. Within this section are four subsections that are listed and explained below.

A. Coach's responsiveness to the client. Listen to each exchange of a conversation as a partnership dialogue — for example, a collaborative and generative conversation between equals. Note how effectively the coach demonstrates the behaviors indicated. Several of the ACC behavioral statements have a particular purpose.

   For example, (3.1) to invite the client to identify and explore their chosen topic; (5.3) to support the client in taking the lead during the coaching process; (7.1) to stimulate the client's awareness of their own perspectives and broaden positions.

   Reflect on what the client offers and how the coach's input supports insight, learning, or progress.

B. Pacing and Silence. Norms about silence, micro-interruptions, speed of speaking, and delayed or immediate responses vary widely around the globe. Evaluators are encouraged to be aware that there may be differences in the norms of the languages in a translated recording. For example, what might seem like a series of micro-interruptions to one culture might be received as an affirmation of listening and attention to another.

C. When reviewing the statements, you will notice the use of "and" or "or". Please note that "and" means it **must be** included, while "or" is an **option**.

D. Refer to support materials such as the **Bias Awareness and Feedback Guide** to help with completing your evaluations.

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Evaluator Mindset

When reviewing and using this guide during the evaluation process, it is important to maintain an evaluator's mindset. The evaluator's role is to evaluate the performance of the coach. Other coaching roles, such as mentor coach or coach educator, are important in supporting the growth of the coach. However, the evaluator mindset is critical for independent, objective assessment.

An assessment is the systematic process of measuring the knowledge or skills demonstrated by an individual. It involves the collection and interpretation of data to make informed decisions about an individual's performance.

Evaluators collect evidence from a recorded coaching session to evaluate specific behaviors developed from the ICF Core Competencies. The ACC BARS is a tool to evaluate a candidate's performance in a specific coaching session at the ACC level of coaching.

Coach educators teach individuals the principles of coaching, based on the ICF Core Competencies and Code of Ethics, and how to apply these principles in practice through the development of coaching skills. The goal of an educator is to equip a candidate with the right set of coaching skills and knowledge. The depth of their knowledge and skills will be evidenced through assessment.

Mentor coaches evaluate coaching skills and share knowledge, expertise, and experience with mentees to support them in achieving and demonstrating the level of coaching competence and capability demanded by the desired credential level.

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Skills Progression

ACC Credential (YOU ARE EVALUATING HERE)

For coaches looking to evidence their foundational coaching skills, knowledge, and competence.

ACC coaches demonstrate fundamental knowledge of the ICF Core Competencies, the ICF Code of Ethics, and the definition of coaching. The ACC is designed to include coaches early in their coaching career and professionals who understand the value of integrating a coaching approach into their practice.

The ACC demonstrates that the credential holder has the knowledge, skills, and understanding of core coaching principles that serve as the foundation for coaching practice.

Professional Certified Coach (PCC) Credential

For the experienced coach looking to evidence their proficiency in coaching skills, knowledge, and competence.

Coaches who have earned the PCC credential have achieved proficiency in their knowledge of and ability to apply the ICF Core Competencies and the ICF Code of Ethics as coaching professionals.

The PCC distinguishes coaches with the verified skills required for effective coaching practice and substantial experience partnering with clients.

Master Certified Coach (MCC) Credential

For seasoned and expert coaches looking to demonstrate their advanced coaching skills, knowledge, and competence.

Coaches who have earned the MCC credential have demonstrated mastery of the ICF Core Competencies and the ICF Code of Ethics.

The MCC distinguishes coaches who demonstrate a depth of knowledge and an ability to apply the core competencies of coaching in full partnership and service to their clients.

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Defining the Standard

Standard: *Something set up and established as a rule for the measure of quantity, depth, extent, value, or quality.*

For evaluation purposes, ***the behavioral statements define the standard of performance required for the specified credential level***. The rating scale options allow the evaluator to rate the coach's performance relative to the standard.

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale

BARS define behaviors that can be observed and evaluated.

Behavioral anchors, or behavioral statements, describe a specific behavior or skill that represents the standard of performance for evaluation purposes.

The ACC level behavioral statements define the standard of coaching performance expected at the ACC level. The behavioral statement as written IS the standard for ACC level coaching. To meet the standard, the coach's behavior must reflect and incorporate the underlined elements of the behavioral statement.

The rating scale allows evaluators to assign a specific performance-level score based on the extent to which the candidate's demonstration of a particular skill aligns with the defined anchor.

Each behavior statement will be evaluated using five rating options as defined on the next page.

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Rating Scale Options

NOTE: The changes in orange were an addition to the original definition to make it clear for assessment at the ACC level.

Exceeds the Standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the Standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Below the Standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

> **NOTE:** In some behavioral statements, "Below the Standard" (partial demonstration) does not meet the intended statement. For example, in the statement, "A8.1 Coach asks questions about what the client has learned during the session." The coach either asks about the learning or does not. In this case, the evaluator would either mark, "Meets the Standard" or "Does not Meet the Standard."

Does Not Meet Standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

N/A — Not Applicable: To be used in rare cases in which the behavior as described by the statement was not relevant to the conversation or there were no opportunities for the coach to demonstrate the behavior.

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Competency 1: Demonstrates Ethical Practice

Definition: Understands and consistently applies coaching ethics and standards of coaching.

Behaviors Consistent With Coaching ICF 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.

NOTE: If there are concerns about a possible breach of the Code of Ethics during an evaluation, evaluators should indicate the specific section of the Code of Ethics that may apply.

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Competency 2: Embodies a Coaching Mindset

Definition: Engages in ongoing personal and professional learning and development as a coach. Works with coaching supervisors or mentor coaches as needed. Develops and maintains a mindset that is open, curious, flexible, and client-centered.

Candidates' understanding of this competency is evaluated in the ICF ACC Exam.

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Competency 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.

NOTE: For evaluation purposes, we are considering the agreement for the present session only.

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 (Behavioral Statements)

A3.1 Coach explores the client's topic with the client.

A3.2 Coach and client reach agreement on what the client wants to accomplish as a session outcome.

A3.3 Coach explores the significance of the coaching outcome to the client.

A3.4 Coach attends to the agreed upon agenda throughout the session.

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A3.1 Coach explores the client's topic with the client.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to invite the client to identify their desired coaching topic, agenda, or focus for the session and explore its relevance for the client.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach invites the client to identify the topic and to clarify aspects of client context, thinking, and purpose for the coaching conversation.

Definitions and Explanations

Exploring with the client involves investigating, inquiring, and demonstrating curiosity about the topic. Exploring the topic requires first identifying the topic.

Coach may use various coaching approaches to identify the topic, such as:

- Asking the client what topic they would like to focus on during the session.
- Invites the client to identify the desired agenda or focus of the session.
- Confirms what the client shares about their focus for the session.
- Asking questions.
- Reflecting back.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

The coach invites the client to identify the topic and to clarify aspects of client context, thinking, and purpose for the coaching conversation.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach explores the client's topic, but does not explore its relevance for the client.

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Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not explore the client's topic.

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A3.2 Coach and client reach agreement on what the client wants to accomplish as a session outcome.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the ability of the coach to understand what the client would like to accomplish as a session outcome.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach must engage in partnership with the client. This means the coach's restatement or summary of the agreement must reflect the client's chosen purpose for the conversation, which may include insights, expectations, or clarification. The agreement is verbally confirmed by both participants.

Definitions and Explanations

Coach and client agree on the client's desired outcome may be evidenced by the coach using such approaches as:

- Inquiring about measures of success or indicators that the client will use to measure progress toward their desired outcome or goal for the session.
- Confirming what the client is sharing about what they would like to accomplish in the session.
- Requesting and reflecting clarification of what the client would like to accomplish in the session.

Rating Scale Application:

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

The coach must engage in partnership with the client. This means the coach's restatement or summary of the agreement must reflect the client's chosen purpose for the conversation, which may include insights, expectations, or clarification. The agreement is verbally confirmed by both participants.

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Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach proceeds **without confirming** the outcome for the session with the client.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **does not inquire** about the client's desired outcome.

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A3.3 Coach explores the significance of the coaching outcome to the client.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to show a basic level of curiosity about the client and how the client relates to what they want to accomplish.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach's comments, reflections, and questions encourage the client to consider possible objective or subjective benefits of accomplishing the stated coaching session purpose.

Definitions and Explanations

To help the client consider how the outcome of the conversation might affect several aspects of their lives, the coach may use one or more of the following:

- Asking questions about what the client wants to accomplish and how it relates to their situation or to the client.
- Inquiring about what is meaningful, important or significant to the client about their desired outcome.
- Inviting the client to consider thoughts, feelings, perspectives, or beliefs about what they want to accomplish.
- Offering an observation and inviting client response.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

The coach's comments, reflections and questions encourage the client to consider possible objective or subjective benefits of accomplishing the stated coaching session purpose.

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Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach makes comments but **does not inquire about** how the outcome is important to the client.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach listens without asking any questions about the importance of the outcome and proceeds with the session.

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A3.4 Coach attends to the agreed upon agenda throughout the session.

This behavioral Statement is evaluating the coach's ability to ensure the session remains focused on the client's agenda.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach demonstrates attention to the client's stated focus and desired outcomes and clarifies or realigns, if the agenda shifts, throughout the session.

Definitions and Explanations

A coach may demonstrate they are attending to the agenda in multiple ways, including, but not limited to:

- Asking questions about what the client has shared and its relation to the agenda.
- Checking in with the client.
- Verifying with the client that the session is progressing and serving the needs of the client.
- Referring back to the stated topic or outcome over the course of the conversation and inviting client to make connections.
- Noting and asking about a possible change in the session focus, reconfirming or realigning the client's desired agenda.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach demonstrates attention to the client's stated focus and desired outcomes and clarifies or realigns, if the agenda shifts, throughout the session.

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Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach may attend to the client's agenda but does not clarify or realign if the agenda shifts.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not attend to the agreed upon agenda throughout the session.

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Competency 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.

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 (Behavioral Statements)

A4.1 Coach acknowledges the client's work in the session.

A4.2 Coach expresses respect, support, or concern for the client.

A4.3 Coach supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, or beliefs.

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A4.1 Coach acknowledges the client's work in the session.

This behavioral statement is looking for an acknowledgement, by the coach, of client insights or client learning as they occur during the session.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach verbally recognizes and reflects the specific details of a client's insight, talents, or learning.

Definitions and Explanations

Acknowledging is an observable behavior. The coach identifies and notes the client insight or learning by:

- Sharing a comment or observation about the client's insight, awareness, or learning.
- Inquiring about the client's insight, awareness, or learning.
- Affirming the client's insight, awareness, or learning.
- Reflecting the client's insight statement and inviting client reaction.

In this behavioral statement, **generic** means it is not specific to what the client offers, and **customized** means the response is tailored to what the client has offered.

Distinction between 4.1 and 8.1:

Behavioral statement 4.1 (acknowledges): This statement focuses on the coach recognizing and **acknowledging** the client's insights.

Behavioral statement 8.1 (asking questions): This statement focuses on the coach's ability to **ask questions** that support the client in identifying what they have learned in this session.

NOTE: Questions can be used as evidence for both statements. It is important to review each of the behavioral statements through the lens of their respective competencies (Cultivates Trust and Safety versus Facilitates Growth)

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Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach verbally recognizes and reflects the **specific details** of a client's insight, talents, or learning.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach makes a **generic** comment about the client's insight, talents, or learning.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not acknowledge the client's insight, talents, or learning.

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A4.2 Coach expresses respect, support, or concern for the client.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to show respect, support, or concern for the client.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach must demonstrate respect for the client's autonomy and dignity and provide a supportive space for client to process.

Definitions and Explanations

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated by:

- Asking the client how the coach could support them in the session.
- Acknowledging the client, the client's expression, or the client's behavior in a manner that maintains the client's dignity and autonomy.
- Responding in a way that shows understanding of what the client has communicated verbally or nonverbally without adding or interpreting beyond what was expressed.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach demonstrates respect for the client's autonomy and dignity and provides a supportive space for the client to process.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach provides responses that demonstrate limited understanding of the client's perspective or expressions.

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Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach neglects opportunities to express understanding and support for the client.

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A4.3 Coach supports the client's expression of feelings, perceptions, concerns, or beliefs.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to respond in a way that supports the client when they share their feelings, perceptions, concerns, or beliefs.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, coach uses questions, observations, or silence to support the client's processing of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, or in the moment experiences.

Definitions and Explanations

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated by:

- Comments and observations in response to the client's feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.
- Clarifying questions about the client's expressions.
- Attending to the client's pace of engaging and, where appropriate, maintaining silence to allow the client to process.
- Affirmations and words of support in response to the client's expressed feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

Distinction between 4.3 and 7.2:

Behavioral statement 4.3 (supporting): This statement focuses on the coach **supporting** the client and **providing them space** to freely express their feelings, perceptions, behaviors or beliefs.

Behavioral Statement 7.2 (inquiring): This statement focuses on the coach **offering questions** that invite the client to explore their feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

NOTE: *Questions can be used as evidence for both statements. It is important to review each of the behavioral statements through the lens of their respective competencies (Cultivates Trust and Safety versus Evokes Awareness).*

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Rating Scale Application:

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach uses questions, observations, or silence to support the client's reflection or processing of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, or in the moment experiences.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach notices client's offerings but does not respond to what the client expresses.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not inquire about the client's feelings, perceptions, concerns, or beliefs.

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Competency 5: Maintains Presence

Definition: Is fully conscious and present with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible, grounded, and confident.

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 (Behavioral Statements)

A5.1 Coach is observant and responsive to the client.

A5.2 Coach demonstrates curiosity about the client, or their agenda, or both.

A5.3 Coach provides space for the client to lead during the session.

A5.4 Coach is silent to allow time for the client to reflect.

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A5.1 Coach is observant and responsive to the client.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to acknowledge what the client presents.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach partners by staying in the moment, acknowledging verbal and nonverbal cues from the client and reflecting them back, responding with relevant questions or reflections, and following the client's lead.

Definitions and Explanations

Partnering may be demonstrated by (but is not limited to):

- Noting a client's reaction or expression and reflection.
- Offering observations about what the client has presented and asking what the client wants or needs.
- Requesting permission or inviting the client to explore further about what the client has shared.
- Engaging in curious inquiry or questions about what the client has shared.
- Adjusting to the client's pace or energy, when needed.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

The coach partners by staying in the moment, acknowledging verbal and nonverbal cues from the client and reflecting them back, responding with relevant questions or reflections, and following the client's lead.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

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Coach may offer observations, but does not explore further in response to what the client offers.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach's questions and observations are not responsive to what the client offers.

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A5.2 Coach demonstrates curiosity about the client, or their agenda, or both.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to show curiosity in the client, the client's agenda, or both.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach partners by asking open-ended questions centered on what the client wants to explore. The coach is curious, in service of the client, the client's agenda, or both.

Definitions and Explanations

This behavioral statement means the coach may be curious about the client and the agenda; however, they need to be curious about at least one of these elements.

Partnering may be demonstrated by (but is not limited to):

- Engaging in curious inquiry or questions about what the client has shared.
- Asking questions or offering observations that encourage the client to think about self and situation.
- Coach's questions are open and without an explicit direction or desired response.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach partners by asking open-ended questions centered on what the client wants to explore. The coach is curious in service of the client, the client's agenda, or both.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

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Coach offers questions without further exploration into the meaning of what the client shares.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach doesn't engage in curious inquiry about what the client shares.

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A5.3 Coach provides space for the client to lead during the session.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to allow the client to lead the conversation.

Meets the Standard

To meet the standard, the coach partners with the client, providing the opportunity to choose the topic, outcome, and path to follow for the conversation in the session by being responsive and non-directive.

Definitions and Explanations

Providing space occurs when the coach creates an environment in which the client is encouraged to lead the session.

Partnering may be demonstrated by (but is not limited to):

- Pausing before responding to provide the client the opportunity to lead
- Inviting the client to determine the course of the session.
- Making an inquiry that will prompt the client to lead.
- Asking the client explicitly to lead.
- Supporting the client as they lead the conversation through affirmations, acknowledgements, summaries, or concise questions or invitations to the client to explore a topic further.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

The coach partners with the client, providing the opportunity to choose the topic, outcome, and path to follow for the conversation in the session by being responsive and non-directive.

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Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach initially allows the client to lead the session, but then becomes directive as the session progresses.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach directs the conversation.

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A5.4 Coach is silent to allow time for the client to reflect.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to remain silent and create opportunity for client thought and reflection.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, coach partners by remaining silent after offering inquiries and pauses to give time for the client to think and respond throughout the session.

Definitions and Explanations

Partnering may be demonstrated by (but is not limited to):

- Providing time for the client to think freely without interruption.
- Maintaining silent pauses.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach partners by remaining silent after offering inquiries and pauses to give time for the client to think and respond throughout the session.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach offers the client space to reflect some of the time, but not consistently throughout the session.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not give the client time to reflect after making an inquiry, offering an observation, or while the client is thinking.

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Competency 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.

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 (Behavioral Statements)

A6.1 Coach listens by recognizing feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs.

A6.2 Coach inquires about, explores, or includes the client's use of language.

A6.3 Coach summarizes or paraphrases what the client communicates to confirm the coach's understanding.

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A6.1 Coach listens by recognizing feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to recognize what the client communicates about themselves.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach offers observations or shares insights they have observed or heard from the client, recognizing their perceptions, feelings, or challenges.

Definitions and Explanations

"Recognizing" is when the coach explicitly acknowledges or notices the client's expressions of feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs, which indicates to the client that the coach is listening.

A coach can demonstrate this behavior in a variety of ways, which include but are not limited to:

- Offering the client an observation using the client's language in response to what the client has shared.
- Acknowledging the feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs shared by the client.
- Providing an observation or reflection.
- Posing an inquiry.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach offers observations or shares insights they have observed or heard from the client, recognizing their perceptions, feelings, or challenges.

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Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **misses some** opportunities to recognize the client's feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **does not** recognize feelings, perceptions, challenges, or beliefs presented by the client.

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A6.2 Coach inquires about, explores, or includes the client's use of language.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to discover the significance of the language being used by the client, or to use the client's words when interacting with the client.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard the coach is curious about, or integrates, the client's words or thoughts into their inquiries or reflections.

Definitions and Explanations

Inquiry and exploration can take several forms. A coach can demonstrate their attention to and curiosity about the client's language in several ways including, but not limited to:

- Integrating the client's words or ideas in questions, comments, or observations offered by the coach
- Inquiring about or offering questions to explore the client's choice of words
- Offering an observation about the language being used by the client

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach is curious about and integrates the client's words or thoughts into their inquiries or reflections.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

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The coach acknowledges the client's words but does not explore, inquire, or use the client's language.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not ask about, comment on, or use the client’s language.

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A6.3 Coach summarizes or paraphrases what the client communicates to confirm the coach's understanding.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to confirm their understanding of what the client communicates through summarizing or paraphrasing to ensure a shared vision.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach verifies their understanding of what the client offered by summarizing or paraphrasing what was shared.

Definitions and Explanations

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated by:

- Rephrasing or restating what the client has said.
- Offering back to the client the main points expressed by the client to ensure proper understanding.
- Checking with the client to confirm the coach fully understands what the client has said.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach verifies their understanding of what the client offered by summarizing or paraphrasing what was shared.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach summarizes or paraphrases what the client offers but does not confirm understanding.

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Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach does not summarize or paraphrase what the client has said to ensure understanding.

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Competency 7: Evokes Awareness

Definition: Facilitates client insight and learning by using tools and techniques such as powerful questioning, silence, metaphor, or analogy.

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 respond fully.

Behaviors Consistent with ICF Coaching Standards (Behavioral Statements)

A7.1 Coach supports the client in viewing the situation from different perspectives.

A7.2 Coach inquires about the client's feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

A7.3 Coach asks clear, open-ended questions, one at a time.

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A7.1 Coach supports the client in viewing the situation from different perspectives.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the ability of the coach to support the client in viewing a situation from new or different perspectives.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach offers observations or asks questions to support the client in viewing the situation from a new or different perspective.

Definitions and Explanations

"Different" in this statement may be an adjustment to a perspective the client has already shared.

This behavioral statement is demonstrated by:

- Asking questions that can support the client in seeing the situation from a new or different perspective.
- Offering observations that can support the client in seeing the situation from a new or different perspective.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach offers observations and asks questions to support the client in seeing the situation from a new or different perspective.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach offers observations or questions but misses opportunities to engage the client in further developing a new or different perspective.

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Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

There is no evidence of questions or observations offered to the client with the intent of developing new or different perspectives.

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A7.2 Coach inquires about the client's feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to use questions to explore the client's feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach asks questions to explore with the client their feelings, beliefs, perceptions, or behaviors in the session.

Definitions and Explanations

This behavioral statement includes questions that acknowledge or explore the client's feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

Distinction between 4.3 and 7.2:

Behavioral statement 4.3 (supporting): This statement focuses on the coach **supporting** the client and **providing them space** to freely express their feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

Behavioral Statement 7.2 (inquiring): This statement focuses on the coach **offering questions** that invite the client to explore their feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

NOTE: Questions can be used as evidence for both statements. It is important to review each of the behavioral statements through the lens of their respective competencies (Cultivates Trust and Safety versus Evokes Awareness).

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

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Coach **asks questions to explore** with the client their feelings, beliefs, perceptions, or behaviors in the session.

Below the Standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **makes inquiries**; however, **does not explore** the client's feelings, perceptions, and beliefs beyond the client's response.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **does not make inquiries** that focus on the client's feelings, perceptions, behaviors, or beliefs.

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A7.3 Coach asks clear, open-ended questions, one at a time.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to effectively use questions to support the client.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach asks clear, open-ended questions, one at a time, throughout the session.

Definitions and Explanations

"Clear" means avoiding unnecessary words, jargon, or complex phrasing so the client doesn't get lost trying to understand what's being asked.

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated by:

- Asking questions that prompt the client to provide more than one-word answers.
- Allowing the client to answer a question before asking another question.
- Asking questions that are understood by the client.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard: The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly as described by the statement.

Coach asks clear, open-ended questions, one at a time, throughout the session.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach asks questions; however, they may not be clear, open-ended, or one at a time.

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Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach primarily asks closed-ended questions or asks a series of questions without allowing the client time to answer.

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Competency 8: Facilitates Client Growth

Definition: Partners with the client to transform learning and insight into action. Promotes client autonomy in the coaching process.

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 (Behavioral Statements)

A8.1 Coach asks questions about what the client has learned during the session.

A8.2 Coach supports the client to use their learning to plan next steps.

A8.3 Coach supports the client to close the session.

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A8.1 Coach asks questions about what the client has learned during the session.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to ask questions that support the client in identifying what they have learned.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach must ask the client about their learning during the session.

Definitions and Explanations

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated by using inquiry to explore the client's learning or insights, or to broaden the client's awareness of what has been discussed in the session.

NOTE: This can happen at any time in the session.

Distinction between 4.1 and 8.1:

Behavioral statement 4.1 (acknowledges): This statement focuses on the coach recognizing and **acknowledging** the client's insights.

Behavioral statement 8.1 (asking questions): This statement focuses on the coach's ability to **ask questions** that support the client in identifying what they have learned.

NOTE: Questions can be used as evidence for both statements. It is important to review each of the behavioral statements through the lens of their respective competencies (Cultivates Trust and Safety versus Facilitates Client Growth)

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

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Coach asks the client about their learning during the session.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **offers their perception of what the client** has learned but **does not partner** with the client to identify their learning during the session.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **does not ask** about the client's learning from the session.

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A8.2 Coach supports the client to use their learning to plan next steps.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to co-create or confirm with the client specific action items to support forward movement toward their desired outcome.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach supports the client in exploring how they will apply their learning to specific, actionable steps.

Definitions and Explanations

Next steps for the client include any action the client wants to take following the session. It covers a wide range of activities, from doing or deciding on a single thing to designing a complete action plan.

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated by actions such as:

- Asking questions that support the client in considering how they may apply new learning, specific action plans, or activities.
- Inviting the client to identify specific action to support the client's forward movement.
- Engaging in dialogue to co-create specific action plans with the client.
- Confirming with the client the specific action they intend to carry out after the session.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach supports the client to explore how they will apply their learning to specific actionable steps.

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Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach supports the client to create actionable steps, but they are **not related to their learning.**

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach **does not** support the client in exploring actionable steps.

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A8.3 Coach supports the client to close the session.

This behavioral statement is evaluating the coach's ability to support the client in closing the session.

Meets the Standard

To meet this standard, the coach supports the client to choose how and when to end the session.

Definitions and Explanations

Closing the session is a cornerstone skill of coaching and should be demonstrated at all credential levels. Partnering to close includes checking with the client for their readiness and how they want to close.

This behavioral statement can be demonstrated using any of the following:

- Inviting the client to identify how they wish to end or close the session.
- Asking the client if there are remaining issues related to their chosen topic that need to be resolved before closing the session.
- Partnering with the client to determine how to use the remaining time in the session.

Rating Scale Application

Exceeds the standard (exemplary demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior as described by the statement with a higher level of coaching performance than would be expected for an entry-level coach at the level being assessed.

Meets the standard (proficient demonstration): The coach demonstrates the behavior clearly and with some consistency as described by the statement.

Coach supports the client to choose how and when to end the session.

Below the standard (partial demonstration): The coach demonstrates part of the behavior as described by the statement.

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Coach offers to close the session, but does not support the client in how or when to end.

Does not meet standard (not demonstrated): The coach did not demonstrate the behavior as described by the statement.

Coach closes the session abruptly.

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