



COMENSA (Association incorporated under Section 21) Coach Supervision Comprehensive Policy Document

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1.1. Definitions

Coach supervision describes the engagement between a person qualified to offer the service of “supervision” and a coach. The practitioner providing the supervision service is known as a coach supervisor, hereafter simplified to **supervisor**. The practitioner receiving the supervision service is sometimes referred to as a supervisee, but hereafter referred to as the **coach**. The person receiving the service of coaching is sometimes referred to as the coachee, but hereafter referred to as the **client**. In scenarios in which supervision and/or coaching takes place within or is related to an organizational context, the organisation may also be seen as a client, but is hereafter referred to as the **sponsor**. For reference to a wider context, we represent this in **Figure 1**.

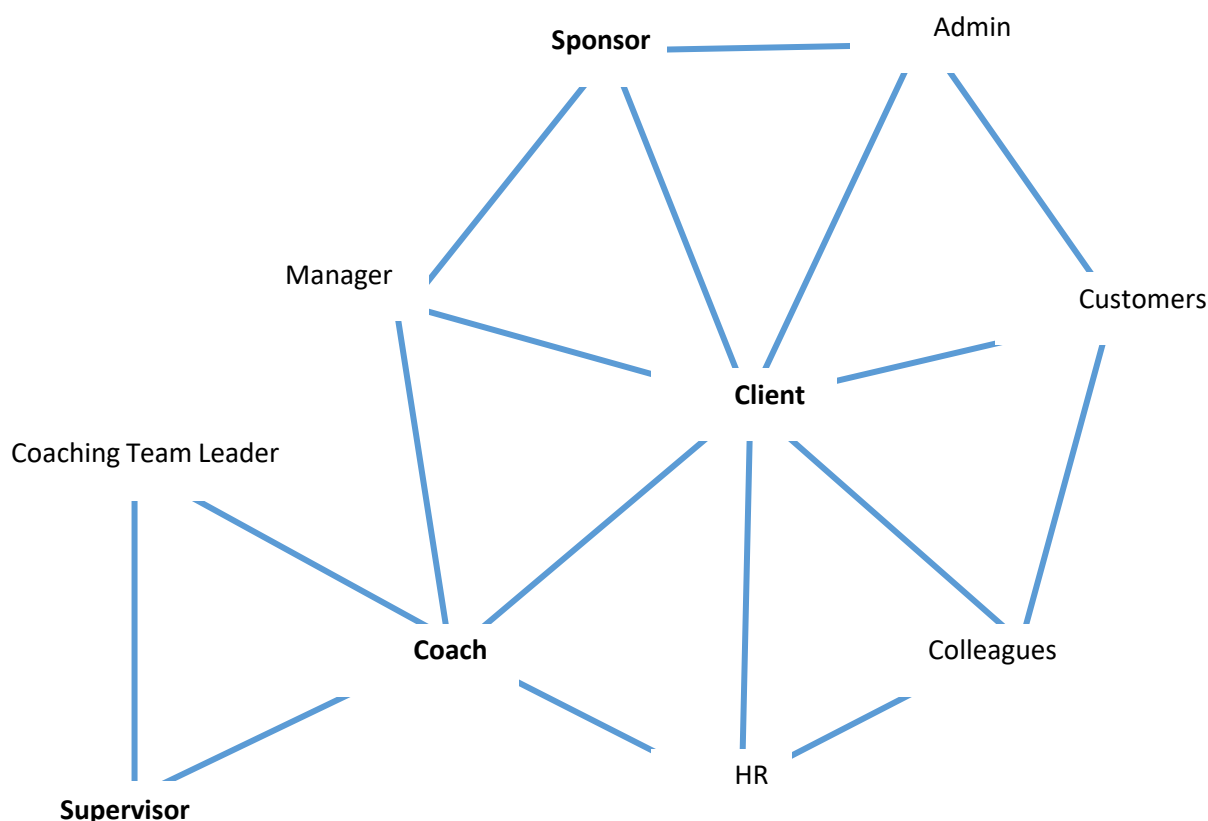


Figure 1 Multivalent Contracting
Supervision for Coaches: a guide to thoughtful work, Cochrane and Newton 2011

1.2. Introduction and Background

The aim of this supervision document is to convey the COMENSA policy, recommending supervision for all coaches, but making it compulsory for credentialed coaches. This document aims to provide members with the necessary information to answer questions about supervision for them to make informed decisions about their engagement with a supervisor and considers what supervision is, what value it offers, how to use it, and traits to look for in selecting a supervisor.

Coaching is a profession as such, accountability, effectiveness and professionalism are core values for all coaches. Supervision provides the coach as well as the client and the organisation with best practice and quality management.

Supervision offers a context in which practitioners can develop the capacity for reflective practice in order to understand and to design their professional reality.

It can be described as a collaborative, co-constructed space in which coaching competencies are explored and developed to,

- help the coach manage high levels of complexity
- have a mechanism for ensuring accountability and ethical practice within their limits of competence and to
- support and stimulate continued professional development.

Supervision may take on different forms such as one-to-one and one-to-a-group. Duration and frequency of supervision sessions may also differ. The particular form of supervision will depend on the needs of the coach. This in turn will be determined by the context and the purpose of the coaching and by the developmental needs of the coach.

The COMENSA Code of Ethics advocates supervision in accordance with the supervision policy. The supervisor will be bound by the requirements of confidentiality referred to in this Code, **but note the exclusions concerned with “harm to self”, “harm to others” “organized crime” and “money laundering”**.

COMENSA recommends a minimum of monthly supervision (group or individual) for coaches. Regular, preferably monthly supervision, irrespective of hours of coaching, is regarded as necessary to remain “fit” to practice; to maintain professional development and quality standards of practice. For credentialed coaches, supervision will be a requirement and form part of the CPD allocation.

2.1. Goals

The goals of supervision are to,

- provide a space in which the coach can learn and maintain professional standards, develop theoretical and practical acumen, and get psychological support.
- provide a learning environment so that the coach can reflect on their coaching practice and assess the extent to which they are meeting the needs of their clients.
- raise awareness of the coach’s own reactions and responses to the client.
- understand the dynamics of how the coach, the client and (where relevant) the organization are interacting.
- challenge the coach’s interventions and practice in a supportive and educative environment.
- develop new approaches and explore other ways of working within client situations.
- ensure that high standards of ethics are maintained.

2.2. Functions and Benefits

According to Hawkins and Smith (2006) and Kadushin (2002), supervision has essentially three functions and areas of benefit for the coach. This is represented in Figure 2.

- Accounting/Qualitative function provides quality control in working with people through clear contracting and awareness of multiple stakeholders. All coaches have issues they don’t see. These blind spots, vulnerabilities and prejudices may be missed in isolation but will become apparent in the supervisory relationship. Coach supervisors can ensure that a coach’s work is appropriate in the context and is ethical. This builds the credibility of the individual coach and therefore the profession as a whole. It also offers protection to the client through sustained focus on ethical standards and professional conduct.
- Supportive/Resourcing function provides emotional support to enable the coach to deal with the intensity of working with clients. This function aims to make the coach aware of how their own emotions and reactions are being affected through the inevitable pressures of being attentive and

empathic. Coaches need to also attend to themselves. Coaching supervision offers a safe space within which coaches can recognize their needs and the risks of collusion, burnout and somatic reactions to stress.

- Developmental/Transformative function promotes reflection on and exploration of the increasing skills and competencies evident in the work of the coach. Coaches may be challenged to become more aware of their own reactions and responses to the client; to understand the client better and the dynamics of how they and their client were interacting; how they have intervened and the consequences of their intervention. All this is in service of promoting understanding, increasing options for different ways of working and overall professional development.

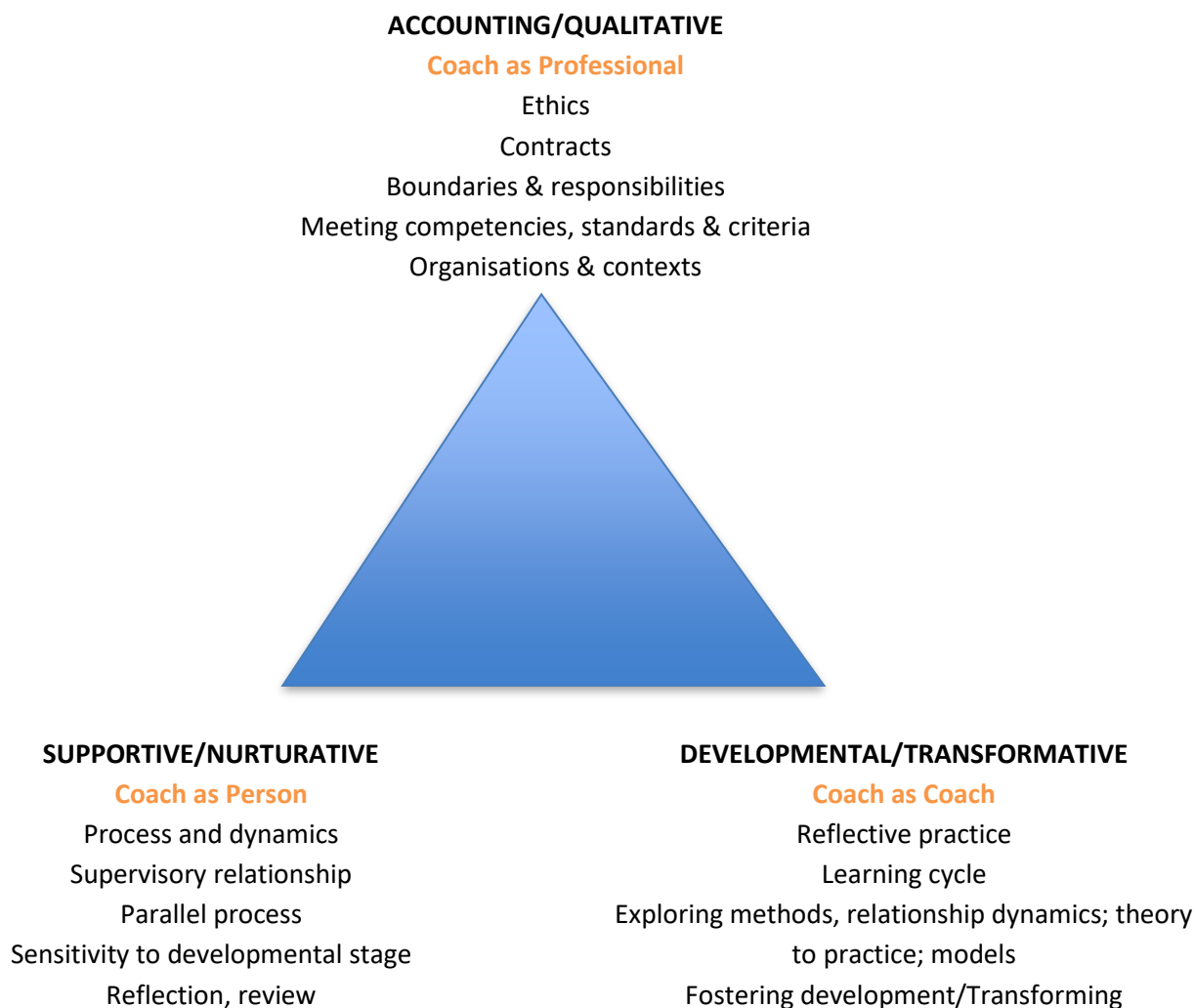


Figure 2 The Supervision Triangle and Functions
Newton & Napper 2007, The Bigger Picture, and Newton 2012, The Supervision Triangle

Benefits of supervision to the buyers and sponsors of coaching

- Ensuring “Do No Harm”.
- An increase in effectiveness and efficiency of coaching.
- Encourages coaches to engage the multi perspective aspects of the coaching context.
- Oversees and maintains consistency within groups of internal coaches.
- Satisfies the buyer’s expectations that the coach is getting support for themselves and with complex ethical or contracting issues.

- Provides the client with a second opinion, i.e. feedback from supervisor to coach and back into the organization, which can provide very useful data to the organization.
- It helps a coach to maintain a professional and objective stance within the systemic complexity of the coach-client-company context rather than getting caught up in the system dynamics.
- Supports standards, accountability and professional delivery of service.

2.3. Behavioural Standards

2.3.1. General

As a baseline the registered supervisor needs to:

- have met the professional requirements of a recognized coach qualification.
- be actively coaching.
- have a qualification as a coach supervisor or appropriate experience as a supervisor (minimum of 30 hours).
- Be in regular supervision themselves.

Throughout the supervisory relationship the supervisor demonstrates:

- integrity, rapport and flexibility.
- a co-creative approach and a non-judgmental, humble and non-competitive stance.
- a meta-perspective to include systemic issues while holding the big picture in mind.
- respect for and an ability to work with individual and cross-cultural diversity.
- the ability to appreciate and integrate complexity.
- transparency in their area of orientation and possible limitations.

2.3.2. Specific

With the following behaviours, the supervisor is expected to pay attention to, work with and balance the three FUNCTIONS of supervision as referred to above (**Figure 2**).

A Facilitates the process

- Creates clear contracts and renegotiates as required.
- Is able to explain what supervision is, and provide the conditions for maintaining the ethical and holding space.
- Ensures an effective working alliance built on trust and collaboration.
- Agrees outcomes and establishes processes to evaluate effectiveness.
- Monitors and evaluates the supervisory process.
- Assesses coach competency and recommends further interventions as required.
- Chooses and applies appropriate models of supervision.

B Ensures ethical and professional behaviours for the benefit of the coach's clients

- Encourages high standards of coaching professionalism, including understanding and adherence to an ethical code of appropriate professional bodies.
- Explores the coach's understanding of ethical and boundary issues.
- Works with the coach to identify boundary issues in relation to specific contexts and techniques, and so raise the coach's awareness of their duty of care to the client.
- Intervenes appropriately and suggests referral where ethical issues are at stake.
- Is able to identify and deal with issues of transference and other behaviours which may impact their own and their clients' perception and/ or judgment.

C Supports the wellbeing of the coach

- Builds confidence in the coach to find new possibilities for addressing blind spots, and from which to operate.
- Enables the coach to work on difficulties when coaching, is “stuck” or in managing conflict situations.
- Identifies and intervenes when the coach is at risk, e.g. isolation, burnout or out of depth.
- Builds conscious competence and expanded learning.
- Celebrates success.

D Facilitates reflection, learning and development of the coach

- Challenges the coach to consider how their own thoughts, beliefs and perspectives influence their coaching.
- Builds skills of reflection and enables the coach to develop awareness, insight and identify patterns of thinking, behaving and practice.
- Provides feedback, challenges appropriately, and is sensitive to the developmental stage of the coach.
- Encourages creativity and experimentation.
- Works with the parallel process and enables the coach to do the same.
- Enables the coach to have new perspectives, systemic and cultural awareness.

E Demonstrates psychological mindedness

- Is able to articulate and demonstrate the principles and philosophies of human psychology that underpin their practice.
- Has a highly developed awareness of the origin and purpose of their chosen course of action with their coach. In any recording, this will be evident “in the moment” and/or in their reflection.
- The supervisor demonstrates an open and humble mind-set, has a continuing curiosity about how their supervision may be stretched and enhanced. Supervisors will encourage coaches to reflect on not only what the coach did, but what they did not do, and why. They will encourage coaches to consider whether they might have chosen to do things differently and where it might have taken them and their client had they done so.
- Is able to observe their own feelings and responses to what is happening in a session, distinguishing what might ‘belong’ to whom and, where appropriate, to offer such insights to the coach to promote their understanding of what might be going on.
- Responds constructively to the coach’s internal psychological tensions.
- Appreciates and deals with complexity, accepts and manages uncertainty, and resists the need to always have a clear answer/solution.

F Demonstrates credibility as a coach

- Is able to role model coaching and demonstrate essential attributes and ways of being, e.g. reflective, client focused, collaborative.
- Shares where appropriate their own knowledge and experience, and is able to explain how their reflections have informed and shaped their practice.
- Have met the requirements for experience within the field.

G Enables value creation for clients and their stakeholders

- Provides perspectives of wider contexts, cultures, stakeholders and systems.
- Explores the coach’s understanding of the client’s wider context and enables the coach to consider

how best to serve the client in the context of client's stakeholder needs, to honour and work with multi-party contracts.

H Knowledge of group dynamics

- Demonstrates flexibility in style of facilitation of the group appropriate for the stage of group development.
- Manages the behaviours of individuals within the group.
- Raises awareness of group dynamics impacting on the group effectiveness and invites the group to explore them.
- Identifies group dynamics, which may relate to the parallel process of the coach-client system.

I Competence in facilitation skills

- Creates a safe learning space for all group members.
- Elicits the knowledge of the individual members or the group as a whole.
- Works purposefully for the group members' mutual and collective benefit.
- Holds the accountability for ensuring the time is used equitably amongst participants, whilst sharing responsibility with all those present.

J Supervision within an organisational context

- Includes the above.
- Very importantly – we make a distinction between coaches who privately engage a supervisor to support their professional development, and supervisors who are specifically used as support of coaches within an organizational intervention. The latter would need to intimately understand the context within which they are supervising and ensure that their work is aligned to supporting the coaches to achieve the objectives of the sponsor within such a context. This is to note that both the coach and the sponsor/organization are supervision "clients".

2.4. References

- Hawkins, P., & Smith, N. (2013) *Coaching, Mentoring and Organisational Consultancy: Supervision, Skills and Development*. 2nd edn. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
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