



COMENSA

CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Code of Ethics and Conduct of COMENSA (Coaches and Mentors of South Africa) aims to clarify the ethical standards which its Members are expected to uphold and the general standard by which they are expected to conduct themselves as members. The Code also outlines the values and principles on which such standards are grounded.
- 1.2 As a condition of membership, members agree to conduct themselves at all times in line with both the letter and the spirit of this Code; and to be held accountable to COMENSA¹, in the event of a complaint relating to conduct inconsistent with this Code being lodged against a member, in terms of the Complaints Procedure.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 The term 'coach' or 'mentor' is used to describe all coaching and/or mentoring activities which fall within any one of the categories for membership of COMENSA. The term used in this Code is coach/mentor.
- 2.2 The term 'client' denotes anyone using the services of a coach/mentor; and is taken to be interchangeable with any other term that the parties to the coaching/mentoring relationship may prefer, including 'coachee', 'mentee', 'partner', 'protégé'.
- 2.3 In instances where the coach/mentor may have two 'clients' - the individual being coached/mentored and the organisation which may have contracted the coaching/mentoring -the latter will be referred to as the 'sponsor'.

3. COMENSA Values

(Set out in alphabetical order, not in order of importance)

3.1 Accountability

Accountability is the cornerstone of any coaching/mentoring relationship; both on the part of coaches/mentors and of their clients. Coaches/mentors should undertake their tasks and responsibilities with an unwavering commitment to be held accountable for their actions and activities. To this effect, coaches/mentors will:

- 3.1.1 Be accountable for their actions, behaviours and the direct results thereof.
- 3.1.2 The primary accountability of coach/mentors is to their clients.
- 3.1.3 A secondary, but equally important, accountability of members is to COMENSA.

3.2 Inclusivity

The principle of inclusivity should be a non-negotiable stance on part of all coaches/mentors. Being non-judgemental, accommodating and unconditionally inclusive of all people they interact with should underpin the values and ethos of all Coaches/mentors. To this effect, coaches/mentors will:

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- 3.2.1 Show respect for the inherent worth of all people, regardless of perceived differences in opinions, personal beliefs and values, cultural background or social status; on the basis that respect for people is a cornerstone of the coaching/mentoring relationship.
 - 3.2.2 Be respectful of the variety of different approaches to coaching/mentoring followed by individuals in the profession.
 - 3.2.3 Approach the coach/mentoring relationship with personal commitment and respect for all other professions.
 - 3.2.4 Conduct themselves in ways that demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the dignity and diversity of all people.

3.3 Integrity

Trust is at the core of the coaching/mentoring relationship. It is expected that COMENSA members will always act with integrity towards their clients, COMENSA, other members and other coaches/mentors. In this regard, coaches/mentors will:

- 3.3.1 Conduct the coaching/mentoring relationship in an honest manner; and guard against any misuse of their influence within the coaching/mentoring relationship.
- 3.3.2 At all times act in the best interests of the client.
- 3.3.3 Never represent the work and views of others as their own.
- 3.3.4 Adopt an objective and responsible approach in assessing the needs and readiness of the client for a coaching/mentoring intervention.
- 3.3.5 Ensure that any claim of professional competence, qualifications or accreditation is clearly and accurately explained to potential clients and that no false or misleading claims are made or implied.
- 3.3.6 Not bring any other coach/mentors' reputation into disrepute.
- 3.3.7 Not bring COMENSA into disrepute through any behaviour, action or conduct which would constitute a transgression of this Code.
- 3.3.8 Maintain professional integrity irrespective of the demands of the sponsor or client.
- 3.3.9 Honour the confidentiality agreement in the coaching/mentoring relationship.
- 3.3.10 Operate within the limits of their own competence, recognise where that competence has the potential to be exceeded and where necessary refer the client either to a more experienced coach/mentor, or support the client in seeking the help of another appropriate professional. When indicated and if professionally appropriate, coaches/mentors may cooperate with other professionals in order to serve their client more effectively and appropriately.
- 3.3.11 Be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest of either a commercial or emotional nature to arise through the coaching/mentoring relationship, and deal with them promptly and effectively to ensure that the client or sponsor is not prejudiced.
- 3.3.12 When indicated, maintain open and constructive communication with other coaches/mentors, within the boundaries of confidentiality agreements.
- 3.3.13 Not engage in any unethical, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct with coaching/mentoring clients. This includes inappropriate or demeaning language or any form of harassment. It is acknowledged that the coach/mentor is in a relationship of trust with the client; and therefore such conduct, including any of a sexual nature, is unethical and unprofessional.

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- 3.3.14 Disclose information only where explicitly agreed with the client (and, where applicable, sponsor) unless the coach/mentor believes that there is convincing evidence of serious danger to the client or others if the information is withheld.
 - 3.3.15 Act within applicable laws and not assist, encourage or collude with others engaged in conduct which may be considered dishonest, unlawful, unprofessional or discriminatory.
 - 3.3.16 Not become or stay involved in any situation where it appears likely that their assessments and/or skills may be misused by others, to the detriment of the client; or take appropriate steps to rectify such misuse or misrepresentations by other parties.

3.4 Professional competence

Professional competence pertains to qualifications, skills, attitude and behaviour that coaches/mentors bring to the coaching/mentoring relationship. Professional competence and disposition should be embedded in and reflect in all dealings, processes and activities, with no exception. The coach/mentor will:

- 3.4.1 Ensure that the expectations of the client and the sponsor are understood and that there is a clear understanding between all parties concerned as to how those expectations are to be met.
- 3.4.2 Consciously create a coaching/mentoring environment that encourages and supports the independence of the client within the coaching/mentoring relationship.
- 3.4.3 Maintain a professional approach in all dealings and conscientiously fulfil obligations and agreements made in the coaching/mentoring relationship.
- 3.4.4 Be focused primarily on maximising the effectiveness of the client in their life and/or work context, and guard against any form of exploitation or manipulation of the client in any manner, including in respect of the financial aspects of a coaching/mentoring relationship.
- 3.4.5 Ensure that the coaching/mentoring contract is appropriate and proportional to the objectives of the coaching/mentoring relationship (e.g. fees, coaching/mentoring objectives, duration).
- 3.4.6 Understand that professional responsibilities may continue beyond the termination of any coaching/mentoring relationship. These include the following:
 - 3.4.6.1 Maintenance of agreed confidentiality of all information relating to clients and sponsors.
 - 3.4.6.2 Avoidance of any exploitation of the former relationship.
 - 3.4.6.3 Provision of any follow-up which has been agreed to.
 - 3.4.6.4 Safe and secure maintenance of all related records and data.
 - 3.4.6.5 Ongoing compliance with all applicable laws of the country.
- 3.4.7 Not lay claim to a level of competence unattained, and exercise competence at least to the level claimed.
- 3.4.8 Provide services only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training or appropriate professional experience. Coaches/mentors should only accept requests for coaching/mentoring services in areas in which they can objectively show that they are competent to provide.
- 3.4.9 Take ownership for self-development and continuous professional development. Maintain awareness of, and stay abreast of current best business practices and

professional information, including relevant practices, legal requirements, standards and technologies relevant to their fields of coaching/mentoring activities, and undertake on-going self-development to maintain competence in the skills they require.

- 3.4.10 Recognise that they may experience personal problems which may have an adverse effect on the coaching/mentoring relationship. Accordingly, coaches/mentors have an obligation to obtain assistance for any such personal problems at an early stage, in order to prevent any impairment in their coaching/mentoring relationship, which may require limiting, suspending or terminating their coaching/mentoring activities.
- 3.4.11 Establish a relationship with a coach supervisor, who will regularly support their development. The coach/mentors' relationship with a supervisor needs to comply with the COMENSA Supervision Framework's recommendations pertaining to their membership category. The supervisor will be bound by the requirements of confidentiality referred to in this Code of Ethics.
- 3.4.12 Take reasonable steps to assess what progress the client is making as a result of the coaching/mentoring process; and in cases where there is little or no progress coaches/mentors should re-evaluate the coaching/mentoring relationship whilst striving to minimise any harm to their client.
- 3.4.13 Whenever feasible, a coach/mentor refrains from taking on professional obligations when pre-existing relationships could create a risk of conflict of interest.
- 3.4.14 If a coach/mentor finds that, due to unforeseen factors, a potential conflict of interest has arisen, the coach/mentor must make every effort to resolve it with due regard for the best interests of the client and compliance with this Code of Ethics.

4. Breaches of the Code of Ethics and Conduct, Complaints Procedure and Sanctions

The following principles apply to breaches of this Code of Ethics and Conduct:

4.1 Principles

- 4.1.1 If a member has ethical questions or queries which are not necessarily complaints, the appropriate channel to seek clarity on such concerns would be through 'supervision' or consultation with a member of the Ethics Committee.
- 4.1.2 If a coach/mentor encounters an ethical dilemma in their own practice of coaching/mentoring, it is incumbent upon them to seek out guidance from a suitably experienced coach/mentor supervisor or member of the Ethics Committee.
- 4.1.3 If a coach/mentor has a concern with the manner in which COMENSA or any of its office bearers or members conducts themselves, to raise such concerns with the appropriate office bearer or with the chairs of either the Ethics Committee or the Governance and Compliance (GAC) Committee. In the event that the member is not satisfied with the resolution on this concern, the member may invoke the Complaints Procedure.

4.2 Powers

- 4.2.1 The COMENSA Ethics Committee shall have the power to institute an inquiry into any complaint, charge, or allegation of improper or disgraceful conduct against any

person who is a member of COMENSA, any office bearer of COMENSA and any committee member of COMENSA; and on finding such person guilty of such conduct, may impose any of the penalties prescribed in 4.5 below.

- 4.2.2 Any member, regardless of seniority, may lodge a complaint against another member;
- 4.2.3 Any company which employs a member and/or any client or individual that makes use of the services of a member may lodge a complaint against that member.

4.3 Procedure

- 4.3.1 Where an individual or company believes that a member of COMENSA or office bearer or committee member has acted in a way which is in breach of this Code of Ethics and Conduct, they should first raise the matter and seek resolution from the member or office bearer concerned. Either party can ask another COMENSA member to assist in the process of achieving resolution.
- 4.3.2 If the individual or company remains unsatisfied they are entitled to make a formal complaint to -COMENSA
- 4.3.3 -, Upon receiving a formal complaint, COMENSA must solicit as much factual information as possible relating to the nature of the complaint and details of the complainant. The complainant may be required to appear in person at any stage during the investigation or disciplinary process.
- 4.3.4 The COMENSA - Ethics Committee may delegate further investigation to an appropriate person or persons who may, depending on severity, include external resources.
- 4.3.5 The COMENSA - Ethics Committee must record all complaints lodged and receive feedback on the progress of the investigation. The COMENSA Ethics Committee will determine whether to close (dismiss) the matter or to institute formal proceedings as outlined herein. In the event that formal proceedings are deemed necessary, the respondent must be informed of the nature of the complaint, in writing, within seven days by means of any appropriate method. The respondent must be given a minimum of seven working days in which to respond, in writing. If the Ethics Committee is satisfied with the explanation received, it may decide to close the matter or, if not, a formal disciplinary enquiry will be convened.
- 4.3.6 In the event that a complaint should be made against a COMENSA member, it is expected that the member will cooperate in resolving such a complaint.
- 4.3.7 The COMENSA Ethics Committee will process all complaints in strictest confidence, will make the complaint 'privileged' and prevent defamation of character.
- 4.3.8 The COMENSA Ethics Committee will not consider nor take any action on frivolous, unsubstantiated and/or anonymous complaints.
- 4.3.9 Complaints that relate to compliance or governance within COMENSA will be referred to the Chair of the Governance and Compliance Committee for investigation and recommendations.

4.4 Formal Disciplinary Hearing

- 4.4.1 The Chair of the COMENSA Ethics Committee will convene a formal disciplinary hearing within a reasonable period of time (not exceeding 14 days except if there are extenuating circumstances) and advise the respondent, in writing, to attend such formal disciplinary hearing. At the hearing, the person who received or investigated

the complaint and/or the complainant in person shall table all evidence and/or facts pertaining to the matter. The respondent shall be given a fair opportunity to answer to the allegations and to present his or her own evidence and/or facts pertaining to the matter. After all evidence has been led, the hearing will be adjourned to consider the facts and evidence tabled and to decide appropriate finding and sanction. These must be communicated to the respondent, in writing, within a period of seven days.

4.5 Sanctions

4.5.1 Sanctions may include a caution, a reprimand or both. It may further include the temporary suspension of the respondent's name from the membership register of COMENSA or from the board or committee for a specified period time, or in some cases the permanent removal of the respondent from the membership register or board or committee.

4.6 Appeal

4.6.1 Any person aggrieved by a finding of, or penalty imposed by, the COMENSA Ethics Committee may, within a period of thirty days after the date of such finding, or the imposition of such penalty, appeal to the Board of COMENSA against such finding or penalty. The Board of COMENSA will convene an Appeal Hearing within a reasonable period of time (not exceeding 14 working days except if there are extenuating circumstances). The Board's decision shall be final and must be communicated to the respondent, in writing, within a period of seven days.

5. Links to other documents

COMENSA MOI (Memorandum of Incorporation)

Ethics Pledge

COMENSA Ethics Committee Terms of Reference

Guidelines to coaches/mentors for specific ethical circumstances and situations

6. COMENSA Ethics Committee

COMENSA mandates the Ethics Committee as the custodian of the Code of Ethics and Conduct. The Committee is responsible for the development (including updating), communication and implementation of the Code on behalf of COMENSA.

6.1 Ethics Chair

National Chair – Andrew Matthews, ethics@comensa.org.za

6.2 Committee Members

Asanda Gcoyi

Belinda Davies

Karel van der Molen

Philip Labuschagne

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