

# THE AC'S TEAM COACH ACCREDITATION SCHEME

Your patience has been rewarded! After a three-year period of research and development, the AC's team coaching accreditation scheme has launched. So, what is it, whom is it for and what does it entail? [Declan Woods](#) explains...

## WHY DID THE AC DEVELOP A TEAM COACHING ACCREDITATION SCHEME?

Two sets of drivers prompted this: the market and its members. In my article for the July 2022 edition of *Coaching Perspectives*,<sup>i</sup> I charted organisations' increasing use of teams as a means of arranging work and improving organisational performance. What followed was an interest in how organisations might support teams to achieve these ends. As more traditional methods of team development (e.g., team building or facilitation) had proved insufficient to the task of responding to complex teams' needs, this created the conditions for a new form of development to emerge. Team coaching has evolved to fill this gap.

Corporate and organisational members were asking the AC for its point of view on team coaching – how it differed from other team interventions, what form it took, what good practice looked like (including how to select great team coaches) and so on.

Members working with teams (or those thinking about moving into this area) were also asking the AC whether it had a scheme to recognise and validate their practice. They wanted to know what great team coaching was and how to develop their skills, as well as obtain professional recognition for their work. Our new team coaching accreditation scheme responded to these needs.

## WHOM IS IT FOR?

The AC has created a team coaching accreditation scheme for two different but related audiences. One for the individual practitioner – the team coach. The other for providers of coaching training. Many AC members currently train team coaches and are looking for accreditation of their existing programmes, while others were considering offering this as part of their training portfolio.

## HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

I led the design of the scheme and developed it over a period of more than three years with input from a huge number of team coaches and coach training providers worldwide. Thank you!

When we began this work, there was no commonly accepted definition of team coaching or agreed team coaching competency model. We therefore started by creating explanations of teams and team coaching before creating a team-coaching-specific competency framework. These were featured in an article in the October 2022 edition of *Coaching Perspectives*, 'Are you team coaching competent?'<sup>ii</sup>

In brief, the approach taken to the accreditation scheme entailed:

1. A review of the literature on team coaching and related fields.
2. In-depth interviews with team practitioners to understand their work with teams, and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to coach teams.
3. The codification of different areas of practice (identified in steps 1 and 2) and the creation of a draft team coaching competency framework.
4. Consultation with a wider group of practitioners to validate the team coaching competency framework (step 3).
5. Further refinement of the team coaching competency model.

Several principles underpinned the design of the scheme. The scheme will:

- Have a member-first approach and respond to members' needs.
- Be globally relevant and internationally applicable.
- Be practice-oriented and inform team coaches' practice.

- Be behaviourally anchored, and provide a 'how to' guide for team coaches, plus enable observable assessment of their work.
- Promote excellent standards of practice: be recognised by coaches, coachees and buyers of coaching services as the industry standard for high-quality team coaching.
- Be inclusive: seek to recognise different theories, models and approaches of team coaching, reflecting the variety of team types and ways of coaching teams.
- Be developmental in itself.

## HOW DO I/WE GET ACCREDITED?

There is one level of accreditation for team coaching programmes and three levels of accreditation for individual team coaches, which are as follows:

1. Team practitioner: for those with some basic training and who work with groups over a shorter duration, probably using a facilitative intervention style.
2. Team coach: for those with more extensive training and who work with a variety of teams over a longer period. They have the ability to work on more complex and demanding topics, including challenging dynamics.
3. Master team coach: for those with extensive training, and significant skills and experience. They have the ability to work with a wide range of teams, flexibly and fluidly, on highly complex and challenging topics including more entrenched team dynamics.

These levels were designed to offer a route into accreditation for practitioners with a range of team coaching training, experience and skills, and provide a progressive development pathway between them. I suggest you start by looking at the more detailed descriptions in the overview document on the AC website to help you decide which level of accreditation is right for you.

The accreditation scheme focuses upon a coach's fitness to practise, assessed against the team coaching competency model. The two most important elements of this are working ethically and the assessment of an observed piece of team coaching (as part of the training). Uniquely for this scheme, the AC has invited coach training providers to carry out this assessment on its behalf, believing this offers the fairest means for team coaches to demonstrate their practice.

A variety of different methods are used in the rest of the assessment process, including logs of team coaching training and experience, a case study across a whole programme of team coaching, and client and coaching supervisor references.

An individual applicant provides evidence against these different elements in a portfolio they submit to the AC. Coach training providers supply details of their training as part of their application for programme accreditation. Apart from the assessed team coaching practice, responsibility rests with the individual to compile and submit their application, and with the AC to assess it and award accreditation status.

## WHEN IS IT AVAILABLE?

The scheme launched in December 2022 and is available to coach training providers to apply to. Team coaches can use the competency framework to inform their practice immediately and begin to compile their individual application straightaway. Templates are available to make it easy to present all of the information needed.

## WHAT RESPONSE HAS THE AC HAD FROM THE MARKET?

The reaction from team coaches, coach training providers and corporate organisations throughout the research and consultation phases has been encouraging. Here's a flavour:

- 'Very comprehensive and detailed... Really great overview for a team coach.'
- 'I am impressed that the team coaching competencies are concise, inclusive and practical. They are very well-thought-out and their purpose is clear.'
- 'Really clear, achievable and pragmatic.'
- 'I am thoroughly impressed with the breadth and depth of the competency framework and the pragmatic and flexible approach to assessment.'
- 'The pathway, competency framework and scheme criteria are pitched at the right levels and have flexibility to give coaches a clear route of progression.'

Georgina Woudstra, principal of the team coach training provider Team Coaching Studio, described it as 'truly ground-breaking'. She believes 'it is the most well-considered, comprehensive and rigorous scheme available'.

After three years' hard work, I am encouraged that we are on the right track.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

You can find out more about the accreditation scheme and competency model on the AC's website ([bit.ly/3hf3T5Q](https://www.ac-coaching.com/bit.ly/3hf3T5Q)).

In addition, I will be hosting a series of webinars for members across the AC's regions to have their questions answered. There will be a separate webinar for coach training providers and corporate members too. Look out for specific communications about these.

I look forward to meeting you on one of these calls!

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr Declan Woods is the global head of team coaching standards and accreditation for the Association for Coaching and CEO of teamGenie, a company specialising in team design, coaching and development. His book, *The Triumphant Team*, has just been published.

[www.teamgenie.com](https://www.teamgenie.com)  
[www.triumphantteams.com](https://www.triumphantteams.com)

- i. Woods, D.N. (2022): The rise of teams at work. *Coaching Perspectives*, Issue 34, July 2022, Association for Coaching.
- ii. Woods, D.N. (2022): Are you team coaching competent? *Coaching Perspectives*, Issue 35, October 2022, Association for Coaching.