



GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE ACADEMIC PROGRAM IN EXECUTIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL COACHING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(Approved During the March 31, 2011 GSAEC Annual Meeting)

This document highlights key components from a comprehensive set of academic standards for executive and organizational coaching programs developed by a working committee commissioned by the Graduate School Alliance for Executive Coaching. Specifically, this report provides a brief overview of the academic standards initiative underway at GSAEC, followed by a summary of 20 academic standards organized into four major sections (i.e., Organizational Alignment, Program Review, Engagement & Growth, Quality & Sustainability). This work is positioned within the broader context of efforts to raise the bar for education and training in the executive and organizational coaching sector. The full documentation of standards includes over 100 pages of descriptions of each standard, relevant sub-standards, and references.

Comments and suggestions are welcome. Inquiries may be directed to either of the committee's co-chairs:

- **Dr. Terrence E. Maltbia**, GSAEC Vice-President & Co-chair Academic Standards - Maltbia@tc.columbia.edu
- **Linda Page, Ph.D.**, GSAEC Board & Co-chair Academic Standard - lpage@adlearn.net

Introduction and Overview of Academic Standards Initiative

The Graduate School Alliance for Executive Coaching (GSAEC) first developed a set of academic guidelines in 2007 under the leadership of Lewis R. Stern as the chair of the Academic Standards Committee. The first version of the guidelines was informed largely by the experience of the committee members including extensive work conducted by the Executive Coaching Forum (2004), which provided a solid foundation for our current work. The guidelines were intended primarily for graduate academic programs, certificate-

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or degree-granting, specifically in executive and organizational coaching. Graduate academic institutions that are developing or offering individual courses in this field may also find the guidelines useful.

The initial work of the committee resulted in a set of 15 standards for graduate programs in executive and organizational coaching. In 2009 the standards committee was reconstituted with Terrence E. Maltbia taking on the role of chair. This second pass at standard development focused on a renewed commitment to explicitly ground each standard in referred literature and available, relevant research. A core strategy is to consult accreditation source materials to ensure that the GSAEC standards for academic programs align with “best practices” promoted by established accreditation bodies such as the members of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Similarly, the second phase of this work was informed by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training’s standards for non-credit, non-degree coaching programs.

The newly constituted Academic Standards Committee created a consistent structure for each standard that included the following architecture: (1) *label*, (2) *narrative introduction* outlining the source materials that inform the construction of each standard and related sub-standards, (3) a *1-3 sentence description*, and (4) a listing of *sub-standards* with short descriptions, indicators and/or examples. Each standard is supported by a detailed list of references in the appendix of the document. (Details from 2, 3, 4, and references are not included in this Executive Summary.) The work of the committee resulted in expanding the initial 2007 set of standards from 15 to 20.

In 2010, Linda Page joined Terrence Maltbia as co-chair of the Academic Standards Committee in order to accelerate the completion of this strategic priority for GSAEC. The work continues to focus on documenting each standard with reference support and sample citations. The third revision to the standards is organized into 4 major categories as a way of communicating a “story” embedded in the journey of creating and sustaining highly effective graduate executive and organizational coaching programs.

This work is consistent with GSAEC’s mission of (1) supporting academic institutions wishing to develop or re-design executive and organizational coaching program offerings; and (2) compiling, organizing, sharing and sponsoring research-informed scholarship that builds the executive and organizational coaching community and contributes to the body of knowledge. Currently, developing a cohesive and unique body of knowledge is a major challenge in this emerging, multidisciplinary field of professional practice.

Our research reveals that a number of coaching associations are, likely unintentionally, ignoring the generally accepted professional standard that “the certification agency must not also be responsible for accreditation of educational or training programs or courses of study leading to the certification” (2003 Report, *Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs*, prepared by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies - www.noca.org). Examples of organizations that appear to be engaged in this practice include:

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- **Association for Coaching** (AC – Note: website indicates AC “accredits” coaches and list both “coach providers” and “training providers”)
- **Association of Professional Executive, Coaching and Supervision** (APECS – Note: website indicates AC “accredits” it’s members at various levels, including supervisors of coaches)
- **European Mentoring & Coaching Council** (EMCC – Note: website indicates that EMCC comes the closest to aligning with an independent “accreditation” body via its partnership with the European Quality Award – specifically European Individual Accreditation; EMCC also lists “accredited” programs)
- **International Coach Federation** (ICF - IAC – Note: website indicates that ICF offers 3-levels of “certification” for coaches-credentialing & various levels of accreditation to coach training providers; work is underway with the International Organization for Standardization [ISO] to verify certification process by a 3rd-party agency)
- **Worldwide Association of Business Coaches** (WABC – Note: website indicates organization provides 4 levels of “credentialing” for coaches and 3 levels of “accreditation” for coach training providers)

The Board of Directors of GSAEC hope that the work of its Academic Standards Committee will provide a foundation for clarity and a level of quality assurance in a context where the variety and proliferation of credentialing systems, and the lack of attention to expected quality assurance standards, has led to confusion and conflict among coach training providers, professional associations, and end-users, whether individual or corporate. This situation has, unfortunately, contributed to skepticism about coaching as a field of professional practice.

In order to enhance the legitimacy of coaching as a field or discipline as well as a professional practice, GSAEC focuses on executive and organizational coaching, the most mature sector within the wider field of coaching practice. The standards outlined in this document adhere to the following definition of executive and organizational coaching:

...A development process that builds a leader’s capabilities to achieve professional and organizational goals.

The focus of executive coaching is on leaders who are in a position to make a significant contribution to the mission and purpose of their organization. This form of coaching is conducted through one-on-one and group interactions; is driven by evidence and the inclusion of data from multiple perspectives; and is built on a solid foundation of mutual trust and respect. The coach, the client, and their organizations work in partnership to help achieve the agreed-upon goals of the coaching engagement. Programs provided by members of GSAEC are characterized variously as executive, organizational, leadership, workplace, or business coaching. All of these are included in the GSAEC definition of executive and organizational coaching.

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Introduction and Overview of Academic Standards Initiative (continued)

Objectives for the Distribution of Academic Guidelines

- **Establish** standards for the graduate academic education of executive and organizational coaching;
- **Test** a set of standards within graduate academic institutions;
- **Stimulate** a dialogue with graduate academicians and their institutions around the world;
- **Implement** an accreditation process for graduate programs in the field of executive and organizational coaching.

Key Assumptions

We start with the recognition that graduate school offerings in executive and organizational coaching are diverse. Within the Graduate School Alliance for Executive Coaching, current and planned programs range from the provision of coaching fieldwork, to individual courses and continuing education programs, to coaching concentrations within more general certificate or degree programs, to full certificate or degree programs focused solely on executive and organizational coaching. Some programs are built upon a specific theoretical or applied model while others are more eclectic, covering a wide range of theories, methods and approaches.

There are programs that primarily utilize live, face-to-face classroom study and practicum supervision and others which are partially or completely reliant on distant-learning formats through electronic media and networks. And finally, some programs are housed in business schools, some in schools of education, and others in professional schools of psychology or psychology departments. Others operate through multi-disciplinary collaborations or in other school divisions.

The following guidelines summarized in this document have been established as a set of recommendations to reflect and respect the diversity of Executive and Organizational Coaching programs and the potential value of them all...when they are well constructed and managed. These guidelines are intended to assist institutions and faculty in developing Executive and Organizational Coaching education and training programs that will provide high-quality education consistent with other professional education and training programs within academia.

The guidelines do not require specific content or numbers of hours of coursework, individual study, or supervised application. They do, however, recommend that those standards be established and managed carefully for any particular program. In addition, where applicable, the guidelines include examples of best practices for comprehensive programs in this field, where those practices are already established in academic programs in executive and organizational coaching.

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In an increasingly global professional and organizational context, common standards

- *Facilitate* comparative quality assessment;
- *Facilitate* lifelong learning by documenting the standards students have met and the outcomes they have achieved;
- *Facilitate* labor mobility;
- *Facilitate* credit transfer and recognition;
- *Foster* accountability by requiring institutions to articulate standards and outcomes;
- *Ensure* that program graduates possess necessary knowledge and skills for employment and further study; and
- *Ensure* that students and society are served by programs of assured quality.

The academic standards presented in the following sections are intended to help executive and organizational coaching programs realize the benefits outlined above. The four sections and related standards are displayed in *Figure 1* below:

Figure 1

GSAEC Academic Standards

Section A <i>Institutional Alignment</i>	Section B <i>Program Review</i>	Section C <i>Engagement & Growth</i>	Section D <i>Quality and Sustainability</i>
Standard #1 Program Mission & Objectives	Standard #6 Curriculum and Program Plan	Standard #11 Professional Practice and Development	Standard #16 Program Values & Ethical Standards
Standard #2 Program Context	Standard #7 Theory and Knowledge	Standard #12 Requirements for Coach Supervision	Standard #17 Faculty Qualifications & Supervision
Standard #3 Requirements for Admission	Standard #8 Core Coaching Competencies	Standard #13 Requirements for Assessing Progress	Standard #18 Stakeholder Relations (e.g., Students, faculty, etc.)
Standard #4 Program Administration & Resources	Standard #9 Coaching Process	Standard #14 Cultural Diversity & Individual Differences	Standard #19 Program Assessment / Quality Enhancement
Standard #5 Relationship with Accrediting Body	Standard #10 Business Acumen	Standard #15 Contribution to Body of Knowledge/Field	Standard #20 Policies Regarding Advertising & Stating Claims

Section A: Institutional Alignment

The standards in this section have to do mainly with characteristics of the host institution that ultimately houses the executive/organizational coaching program. The department, school, or program within that host institution may itself be accredited by a discipline- or profession-specific body: American, Canadian, or Other Psychological Association (e.g., APA, CPA, etc.), Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Association of MBSs (AMBA), European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), International Coach Federation (ICF), Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC), International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET), etc. The requirements of these bodies relate more to Sections B-D of this document, although each typically makes sure that the host institution meets overall standards such as those of Section A as a prerequisite to meeting more discipline- or profession-related requirements.

Although organizational requirements for accreditation of host institutions may be labeled or organized differently depending on the jurisdiction, most are covered by the following five standards:

Standard #1: Program Mission and Objectives

Standard #2: Program Context

Standard #3: Requirements for Admission

Standard #4: Program Administration and Resources

Standard #5: Relationship with Accrediting Body

Section B: Program Review

Once a solid organizational structure is in place to support the design, development and implementation of an executive and organizational coaching program, the focus shifts to determining: *What needs to be learned? What is the range of options to facilitate the learning?*

This section of the academic standards responds to these important questions by first identifying the critical considerations for curriculum design and program planning; then outlining the foundational theory and knowledge base that guide executive and organizational coaching programs; continues with a listing of core coaching competencies; follows with a description of the coaching process; and concludes with the essential standards that contribute to the development of business acumen:

The following academic standards are covered in Section B: Program Review:

Standard #6: Curriculum and Program Plan

Standard #7: Theory and Knowledge

Standard #8: Core Coaching Competencies and Skills

Standard #9: Coaching Process

Standard #10: Business Acumen

Section C: Engagement and Growth

The five standards that comprise Section B focus on the planning and design of high-impact educational experiences for executive and organizational coaches. The five academic standards presented in this section place an emphasis on facilitating the learning process combined with providing structures for the rigorous assessment of learning outcomes intended to provide a foundation for ongoing growth and development.

Specifically, this section provides guidelines of developing and sustaining a professional executive and organizational coaching practice; protocols for effective coach supervision; requirements for assessing participant progress toward stated learning objectives; strategies for leveraging diversity and accounting for individual differences; and importantly building a commitment for contributing to the knowledge base to inform the professional practice of executive and organizational coaching.

The following five Academic Standards comprise Section C:

Standard #11: Professional Practice Development

Standard #12: Requirements for Coach Supervision

Standard #13: Requirements for Assessing Progress

Standard #14: Diversity and Individual Differences

Standard #15: Contribution to Body of Knowledge/Field

Section D: Quality and Sustainability

This final section of GSAEC's academic standards for executive and organizational coaching programs builds on the prior three sections with an emphasis on overall curriculum effectiveness and its long-term vitality. This section supports program improvement, one of the main purposes of quality assessment.

The five standards in Section D include:

Standard #16: Program Values and Ethical Conduct

Standard #17: Faculty Qualifications and Supervision

Standard #18: Stakeholder Relations (Students, Faculty, Administration, Clients)

Standard #19: Program Assessment and Quality Enhancement

Standard #20: Policies Regarding Advertising and Stating of Claims

APPENDIX

General & Selected References

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