



INTERNATIONAL
COACH GUILD

EXPANDED ICG CORE COMPETENCIES

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Integrating the Next Generation of Coaching Mastery

The ICG competency framework consists of 15 core competencies across five domains. These competencies describe the behaviours, capabilities, and professional standards required for effective coaching practice.

In the evolving coaching landscape, each competency now incorporates deeper capabilities including self mastery, systems thinking, identity transformation, behavioural change design, and sustainable transformation.

Domain A **Self-Management**

Competency I **Effectively Manages Self**

A professional coach demonstrates a high degree of self-mastery, emotional awareness, and personal responsibility. The coach recognises that their internal state directly influences the quality of the coaching relationship and the effectiveness of the conversation.

This competency requires the coach to develop ongoing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and the ability to remain grounded and resourceful regardless of the circumstances presented by the client.

The coach continually observes their own thinking, emotional responses, biases, and assumptions so that these do not interfere with the coaching process.

Effective self-management also includes the ability to regulate personal emotions and remain composed when working with challenging client situations. This requires an understanding of emotional regulation, both within oneself and within the client.

Coaches operating at mastery level are able to recognise when their own experiences or beliefs may influence the conversation, and they intentionally maintain neutrality so the client's perspective remains central.



Self-mastery also involves the ability to operate with humility, curiosity, and openness, recognising that coaching is a process of exploration rather than control.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Self-mastery
- Emotional regulation awareness
- Personal responsibility and agency
- Continuous reflective practice



Competency 2

Meets the ICG Code of Ethics and Professional Standards

Professional coaching requires unwavering commitment to ethical leadership and integrity.

The coach understands and applies the ethical standards defined by ICG, ensuring that all coaching engagements are conducted with professionalism, confidentiality, respect, and appropriate boundaries.

Ethical leadership extends beyond compliance with rules. It reflects a commitment to act in the best interests of the client while maintaining responsibility to the coaching profession and broader community.

Coaches demonstrate ethical maturity by recognising the limits of coaching and referring clients to other professionals when appropriate.

Ethical practice also requires the coach to maintain transparency in the coaching relationship, including the scope of the engagement, the nature of the coaching process, and the responsibilities of both coach and client.

This competency also requires the coach to create an environment of psychological safety, where clients feel respected, valued, and secure in sharing their thoughts, emotions, and experiences.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Ethical leadership
- Psychological safety
- Professional responsibility
- Integrity and confidentiality



Competency 3

Demonstrates Commitment to Ongoing Professional Development

Coaching mastery requires a lifelong commitment to learning, reflection, and professional growth.

Professional coaches continually expand their knowledge, capabilities, and awareness in order to serve clients more effectively in an evolving world. This includes deepening their understanding of psychology, behavioural science, emotional intelligence, systems thinking, and the dynamics of human transformation.

Coaches actively reflect on their own practice, regularly seeking feedback from peers, mentors, and clients to identify opportunities for improvement. They demonstrate humility and curiosity, recognising that mastery is an ongoing journey rather than a fixed destination.

In the future landscape of coaching, professional development also includes the responsible exploration of emerging technologies that influence learning, insight, and human development. Coaches remain informed about tools such as artificial intelligence and digital learning systems that may support research, preparation, and reflective practice.

However, the coach maintains clear discernment in how these technologies are used. While artificial intelligence can support analysis, learning, and idea generation, it does not replace the human presence, empathy, judgment, and relational intelligence that define effective coaching.

Future-ready coaches, therefore, develop the ability to integrate technological tools responsibly while preserving the deeply human nature of the coaching relationship.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Learning integration
- Continuous improvement and intellectual curiosity
- Development of transformation knowledge
- Responsible use of emerging technologies, including AI

Domain B

Relationship Management

Competency 4

Establishes the Coaching Agreement

The coach ensures that the coaching relationship is clearly defined and aligned with the needs and expectations of the client.

This includes clarifying the purpose of the coaching engagement, defining the desired outcomes, and establishing mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the relationship.

Establishing a coaching agreement also involves helping the client develop clarity around the goals they wish to pursue and the broader context in which those goals exist.

Advanced coaching practice recognises that goals exist within larger systems, including personal values, organisational environments, and life circumstances. Therefore, the coach helps the client consider goals within a systems thinking framework, recognising the interconnected factors that influence success.

The coach ensures that goals are meaningful, aligned with the client's identity and values, and capable of producing sustainable change.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Strategic goal architecture
- Systems thinking
- Outcome clarity
- Alignment of goals with client identity



Competency 5 Establishes and Maintains Trust and Intimacy with the Client

Trust forms the foundation of effective coaching.

The coach creates an environment where the client feels safe to explore their thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and aspirations without fear of judgement or criticism.

This requires the coach to demonstrate empathy, authenticity, consistency, and respect.

Establishing trust also requires the coach to recognise the importance of psychological safety, ensuring that the client feels comfortable expressing uncertainty, vulnerability, and new perspectives.

The coach views the client as capable and resourceful, even when the client may temporarily doubt their own abilities.

Through this supportive environment, the coach encourages the client to explore deeper aspects of their identity, beliefs, and behavioural patterns.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Psychological safety
- Empathy and emotional presence
- Identity exploration
- Respect for client autonomy

Competency 6

Provides a Coaching Presence

Coaching presence refers to the coach's ability to be fully attentive, engaged, and responsive within the coaching conversation.

The coach demonstrates curiosity, openness, and flexibility while remaining focused on the client's agenda.

A strong coaching presence allows the coach to sense shifts in the client's thinking, emotions, and behaviour patterns.

The coach remains comfortable with uncertainty and is willing to explore new perspectives alongside the client.

This competency also includes the ability to recognise and regulate emotional dynamics within the conversation, enabling the coach to support the client in navigating strong emotions constructively.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Coaching presence
- Emotional regulation coaching
- Curiosity and exploration
- Attunement to client dynamics



Domain C

Technical Coaching Skills

Competency 7

Assesses the Situation

Effective coaching requires the ability to understand the broader context of the client's situation and recognise the patterns influencing their experiences and results.

The coach listens carefully for patterns in the client's thinking, behaviour, decision-making, and emotional responses. By exploring the relationships between these elements, the coach helps the client understand the deeper dynamics that shape their current reality.

Assessment involves more than identifying surface-level problems. The coach seeks to understand the client's goals, values, environment, relationships, identity, and belief systems in order to identify the factors that influence their choices and outcomes.

Masterful coaches recognise that client challenges rarely exist in isolation. Instead, they arise within interconnected systems of behaviour, environment, relationships, and internal narratives.

Through pattern recognition and systems thinking, the coach helps the client explore how these elements interact.

In the evolving landscape of coaching, analytical tools and emerging technologies may assist in recognising patterns or identifying trends that influence the client's situation. Artificial intelligence and digital analysis tools can support insight generation, data interpretation, and contextual exploration.

However, the coach retains responsibility for interpretation and judgement. Technology may assist in highlighting patterns, but it is the coach's role to interpret those patterns with wisdom, ethical awareness, and sensitivity to the client's unique circumstances.

The ultimate goal of assessment is not analysis alone, but helping the client gain clarity about the deeper dynamics shaping their experiences and the opportunities available for meaningful change.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Pattern recognition
- Systems thinking
- Contextual awareness
- Interpretation of insights generated through analytical tools, including AI

Competency 8

Demonstrates Effective Listening

Deep listening is one of the most powerful tools in coaching.

The coach listens not only to the words spoken by the client but also to the underlying meaning, emotional tone, and unspoken assumptions.

Effective listening allows the coach to understand the client's worldview and the beliefs that shape their experiences.

At an advanced level, listening becomes cognitive listening, where the coach recognises patterns of thinking, language, and interpretation that influence the client's behaviour.

The coach reflects these insights back to the client in ways that increase awareness and expand perspective.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Cognitive listening
- Interpretation of meaning and emotion
- Awareness of thinking patterns
- Reflective feedback



Competency 9

Demonstrates Impactful and Effective Questioning

Powerful questioning enables clients to examine their assumptions, explore new possibilities, and discover solutions that align with their goals and values.

Transformational questioning moves beyond gathering information. It challenges existing perspectives and encourages the client to think in new ways.

Effective questions help clients recognise limiting beliefs, consider alternative interpretations, and identify opportunities for growth.

Through skilful questioning, the coach supports the client in exploring deeper aspects of identity, motivation, and decision-making.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Transformational questioning
- Perspective shifting
- Identity exploration
- Expansion of possibility

Domain D

Facilitating Progress

Competency I0

Expands Client Awareness

Coaching creates meaningful change by expanding awareness.

The coach helps the client recognise patterns in their thinking, emotions, and behaviour that influence their results.

This includes exploring how beliefs, assumptions, and identity influence decision-making.

Through this process, the client gains a deeper understanding of who they are and how they interact with their environment.

Expanding awareness often leads to identity transformation, where the client begins to see themselves and their capabilities in new ways.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Identity transformation
- Awareness of internal patterns
- Cognitive reframing
- Exploration of possibilities



Competency II Moves the Client to Cause

A central objective of coaching is helping clients recognise their ability to influence outcomes.

Rather than seeing themselves as victims of circumstance, clients learn to take responsibility for their decisions and actions.

The coach supports the client in recognising where they have agency and where they can make meaningful choices.

This shift from effect to cause strengthens confidence, resilience, and motivation.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Personal agency
- Behavioural change design
- Responsibility for outcomes
- Empowerment

Competency 12

Inspires Learning and Growth

The coach encourages the client to experiment with new behaviours, perspectives, and approaches.

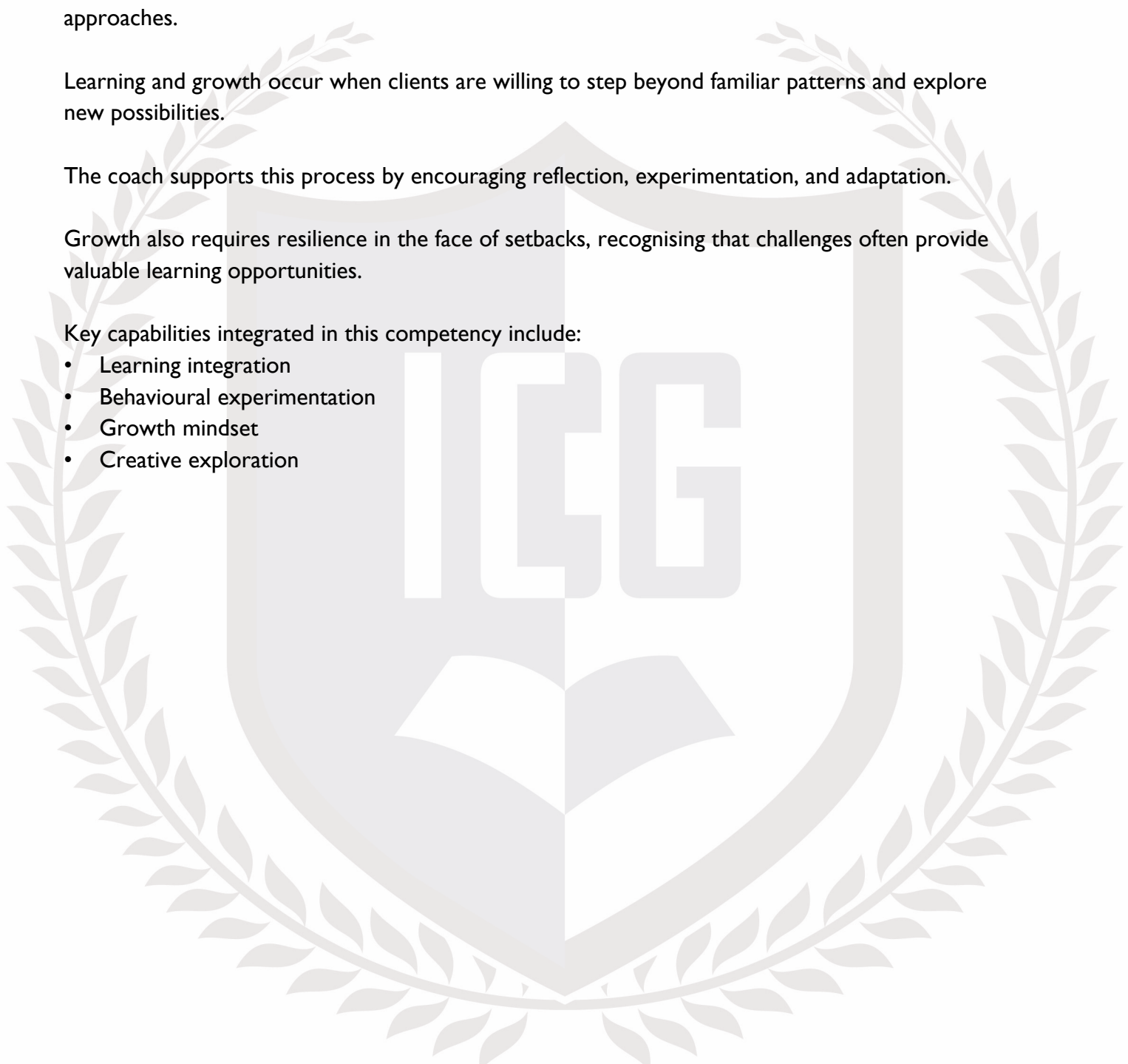
Learning and growth occur when clients are willing to step beyond familiar patterns and explore new possibilities.

The coach supports this process by encouraging reflection, experimentation, and adaptation.

Growth also requires resilience in the face of setbacks, recognising that challenges often provide valuable learning opportunities.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Learning integration
- Behavioural experimentation
- Growth mindset
- Creative exploration





Domain E

Progress Management

Competency I3

Provides Direct Communication

Effective coaches communicate with clarity, honesty, and respect.

Direct communication ensures that insights, observations, and feedback are shared in ways that support the client's growth.

This includes highlighting patterns the client may not yet see, challenging assumptions when appropriate, and offering perspectives that encourage deeper reflection.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Honest feedback
- Insightful reflection
- Courageous communication
- Perspective expansion

Competency I4 Develops Goals and Action Plans

Coaching supports clients in translating insight into action.

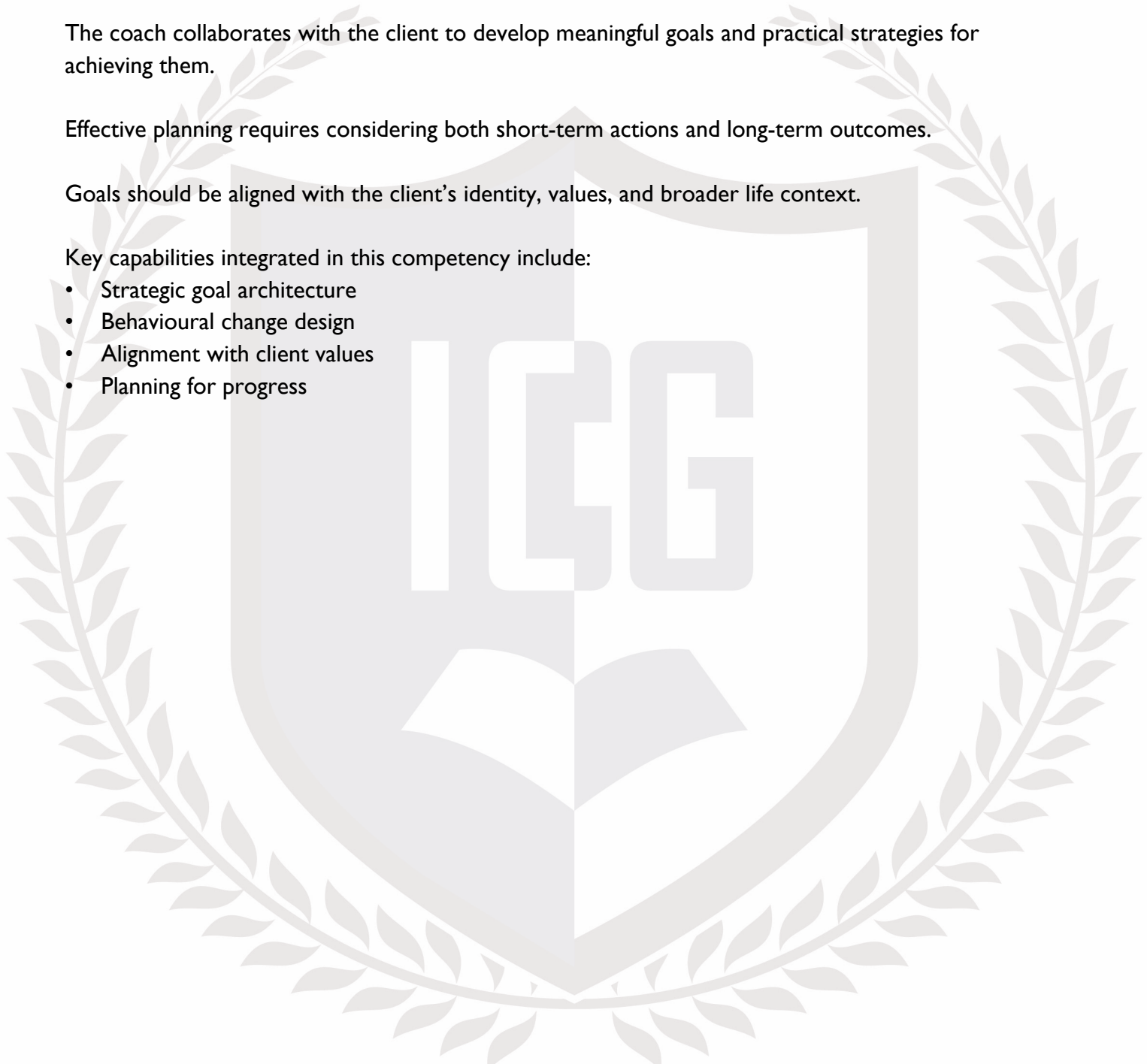
The coach collaborates with the client to develop meaningful goals and practical strategies for achieving them.

Effective planning requires considering both short-term actions and long-term outcomes.

Goals should be aligned with the client's identity, values, and broader life context.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Strategic goal architecture
- Behavioural change design
- Alignment with client values
- Planning for progress





Competency 15 Manages Accountability and Advancement

Accountability ensures that coaching conversations lead to real progress.

The coach supports the client in tracking actions, reviewing progress, and learning from both success and setbacks.

Effective accountability also recognises that transformation is not always linear. Clients may encounter obstacles or unexpected outcomes.

The coach helps the client interpret these experiences as opportunities for learning and adjustment.

The ultimate objective is sustainable transformation, where the client develops the ability to maintain progress independently.

Key capabilities integrated in this competency include:

- Accountability leadership
- Learning integration
- Sustainable transformation
- Continuous progress