

Route to Certification in Business Coaching Psychology

“Business Coaching Psychology is the application of coaching psychology theory and techniques to the particular environment of business, work, and other organisational settings.”

This document lays out the Business Coaching Psychology Certification process which is being introduced by the Association for Business Psychology (ABP). This is intended to support candidates and mentors who are going through this process. This document has three main sections:

1. Introduction and overview of the certification and framework.
2. Details on the process, criteria and evidence required to achieve certification.
3. Appendices to provide details of framework.

1. Introduction and Overview

What is Business Coaching Psychology?

Business Coaching Psychology is the application of coaching psychology theory, techniques and practice to business, work and other organisational settings. As such, it adopts the principles of coaching psychology in order to use scientific evidence to inform practice. The goal of Business Coaching Psychology is to make a positive difference to the working lives of individuals receiving coaching and those around them. Similarly to Business Psychology, Business Coaching Psychology aims to create healthy, productive and mutually beneficial relationships between people and organisations through the application of coaching in work and organisational settings.

Business coaching psychologists may elect to further specialise their practice within this environment (for example; executive coaching, career coaching, etc.). Through Business Coaching Psychology, individuals may experience increased wellbeing at work, greater control over their work-life balance, increased performance, and more. In turn, organisations may benefit from healthier, more engaged employees.

Certification Objectives

Certification serves as an acknowledgement of an individual's level of skill and training in a given area (in this case, Business Coaching Psychology). Certification is achieved through recognition of your skills and knowledge in a specific domain, using the below process¹.

The two main objectives of the ABP Business Coaching Psychology Certification process are:

- a) to provide a route for ABP members to certification in Business Coaching Psychology which evidences their expertise, competencies and skill in the same way that Business Psychology Certification currently provides.
- b) to facilitate professional benchmarking within the field.

In achieving these objectives, the ABP certification framework aims to:

1. support the training and professional development of members engaged in the field of Business Coaching Psychology
2. facilitate individuals in gaining formal recognition for their contributions to teaching and learning in Business Coaching Psychology
3. acknowledge and recognise the specialist expertise that individuals have developed in Business Coaching Psychology
4. embed scientist practitioner thinking and practice in Business Coaching Psychology
5. encourage new developments in the field of Business Coaching Psychology
6. develop a community of likeminded coaches to share good practice, opportunities for formal and informal supervision, and professional development.

Overview of Certification Framework

To become a Certified Business Coaching Psychologist, applicants must show their understanding of how Business Coaching Psychology is applied.

There is only one level of certification in Business Coaching Psychology; Certified Business Coaching Psychologist (CBCP).

There are three routes to achieving Certified Business Coaching Psychologist, please discuss your experience and current level of membership with the ABP when deciding which application route you would need to take.

¹ Certification is different to the UK process of Chartership for psychologists. Chartered Psychologist is a legally protected status and grants the right to practice by the accrediting body, the British Psychological Society (BPS). This qualification is unique to the Association for Business Psychology and **does not** lead to Chartered status with the BPS or Registered status as a Practitioner Psychologist with the HCPC.

For each of the three levels, evidence is required which shows the applicant's understanding and experience across four core areas:

1. Business Coaching Psychology Areas of Practice (AP)
2. The Consulting Cycle for Business Coaching Psychology (CC)
3. Professional Business Practice (PB)
4. ABP Values (V)

1. BUSINESS COACHING PSYCHOLOGY AREAS OF PRACTICE (AP)

Within Business Coaching Psychology, coaches are often either specialists or generalists, applying their skills and knowledge in diverse and ambiguous environments. The ABP has identified several broad practice areas in the field.

- The Psychology of Learning and Development (Coaching)
 - Executive Coaching
 - Leadership Coaching (Including Coaching as part of wider Leadership Development)
 - Career Coaching (Including Transitioning Coaching, Second Career Coaching)
 - Performance Improvement Coaching
 - Team Coaching
 - Psychometric Feedback Coaching
 - Health & Wellbeing Coaching (e.g. Holistic Fitness & Nutrition, Ergonomics, Stress management, Work/life balance, Work to Family conflict, Family to Work conflict)
 - Specialist coaching (including Coaching people with neurodiverse needs)
 - Business Coaching: (e.g. Coaching business owners and entrepreneurs, focusing on business growth, strategy development and operational efficiency)
 - Skills Coaching: (e.g. Public Speaking, Writing, Technical Skills)

Business Coaching Psychologists are additionally expected to evidence their practice through the scientist practitioner model by showing how their work is informed by the theory and principles of business psychology.

2. THE CONSULTING CYCLE FOR BUSINESS COACHING PSYCHOLOGY (CC)

Business Coaching Psychologists typically work across the consulting cycle, which has been adapted from the Business Psychology consulting cycle. The certification process is designed to support coaches in evidencing their knowledge, skills and experience at each stage of the consulting cycle:

- Stage 1. Advise** – Prior to coaching, acts as an independent professional who can be trusted to offer an unbiased, scientifically credible perspective; able to discuss a wide range of people issues at work – from careers to large scale organisational change.
- Stage 2. Diagnose** – Prior to coaching, identifies underlying issues and challenges; employs active listening skills to draw out perspectives from key stakeholders. Combines evidence to diagnose needs and developmental goals.
- Stage 3. Design** – Formulates a coaching approach for each individual, including contracting and agreement of development goals.
- Stage 4. Implement** – implements effective coaching programmes using psychological frameworks to inform their approach, whether explicitly or implicitly, to bring about insight and learning.
- Stage 5. Evaluate** – evaluates the impact of coaching interventions continuously, incorporates supervision (or equivalent) and other self reflection activities into their coaching practice.

3. PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICE (PB)

The ABP has identified several core professional practice principles which differentiate the field from other psychological disciplines. Business Coaching Psychologists are expected to demonstrate and apply knowledge in these areas:

- **Business or commercial acumen**, for example, fluency in the language of business, understanding common acronyms, interpreting P&L accounts, measuring ROI, feasibility studies, creating business cases, business impact and sustainability
- **the legal environment** in which organisations and individuals operate
- business ethics and Business Coaching Psychology ethics
- diversity and inclusion
- both a critical consideration of latest trends in business and being able to critique their appropriateness
- promoting the informed application of **evidence-based psychology** in the world of work and demonstrate its value.

4. ABP VALUES (V)

In addition, candidates must show an understanding of and commitment to working within the ABP Values. The ABP has a number of Values which Business Coaching Psychologists at all levels are expected to understand and commit to. These are:

- **Being inclusive:** welcoming all those who embrace Business Coaching Psychology
- **Being accessible:** helping to make the application of Business Coaching Psychology user-friendly
- **Promoting Business Psychology:** raising awareness of the specialist value of Business Coaching Psychology for people and organisations
- **Demonstrating best practice:** sharing examples of Business Coaching Psychology's application
- **Building capability:** enabling the development of Business Coaching Psychology's knowledge/skills, building an awareness of one's own values, beliefs and behaviours and how these impact practice as well as a commitment to continuous professional development.

2. Certification Process and Criteria

The Process

Anyone who wishes to undertake the Business Coaching Psychology Certification process must be a member of the ABP. The exact process for certification in Business Coaching Psychology is dependant on the level of membership and certification that you currently hold with the ABP.

All prospective applicants are encouraged first to read through this handbook, the process and associated forms. Those applicants who are motivated to proceed will complete an initial short application form and pay an initial small application fee. This fee is deducted from the total cost of certification should the applicant continue through the process. This initial application allows the ABP to review the suitability of candidates before they embark upon the rigorous full application process.

ROUTE A) APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFIED PRINCIPLE BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGISTS, FELLOWS, HONORARY, OR RETIRED MEMBERS WHO HAVE ONE OF THE ABOVE CERTIFICATES.

For those applying under this category, applicants will need to complete an initial application form. They will then be sent the BCP evidence spreadsheet to complete. They must also submit the reflective paper and ethical dilemma story followed by a viva as the end point assessment.

ROUTE B) APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFIED BUSINESS PSYCHOLOGISTS

For those applying under this category, applicants will need to complete an initial application. Once this is received they will be allocated a mentor. Applicants will then need to complete the BCP evidence spreadsheet, the 'Reflective paper' and ethical dilemma story. Once these have been submitted, they will attend the final viva.

ROUTE C) APPLICATIONS FOR GENERAL MEMBERS

Under this category, those applying will need to complete an initial application. Once this is received they will be allocated a mentor and will complete the full application process using the evidence submission paper. Once this is submitted, they will complete a final viva that will include a coaching assessment exercise.

The outline steps of the ABP Business Coaching Psychology Certification process for each category of current membership are laid out in figure 1 below.



Figure 1: steps in the Business Coaching Psychology certification process dependant on current membership and level of certification held.

INITIAL APPLICATION

Initial applications will be sent to the ABP and can be downloaded from the Business Coaching Psychologist Certification section of the website. Please ensure that you provide correct contact details and upload a CV.

MENTORING

Mentoring is a requirement for applicants who are currently CBP or General Members. Once the initial application is processed and approved, candidates will pay the full certification fee and will be matched with and allocated a mentor. Mentors are experienced ABP members and coaching psychologists who are allocated to each candidate to support and guide them through the application process. Candidates are encouraged to work closely with their mentors who will not only provide advice and encouragement but also assist the candidate in selecting instances of evidence-based practice and identifying how those examples meet the requirements for Certification. Additionally, your mentor will be essential in identifying relevant issues to include in your 'Reflective Paper' assignment, discussing ethical dilemmas or ethical concerns that can be included as an ethical dilemma story, or examples of practice to include in the full application (general members only). Please note that they are there to guide applicants, not to write submissions for them.

BCP EVIDENCE SPREADSHEET

Each applicant will be asked to complete the BCP evidence spreadsheet. This maps the Business Coaching Psychology areas of practice, consulting cycle, professional business practice elements and values that you will need to demonstrate as part of their application. You are required to give a self rating against each item (ratings from 1-4 are explained on the spreadsheet), giving brief supporting examples from your practice. You are also required to submit your coaching hours and supervision hours.

FULL APPLICATION

For those completing the full application process, you will also be required to complete some brief examples of your practice for consideration. You may provide between 3-6 examples, covering one or more of the Coaching areas of practice (AP), however your assessors must be able to see evidence of the application of the whole consulting cycle for Business Coaching Psychology (CC) in each example. Additionally, there must be evidence of all elements of Professional Business Practice and all relevant elements of the ABP Values (V) within the submission as a whole.

The full application also comprises an application form providing the names of two referees who can support the application. Referees are required to have known the applicant for a minimum of 3 years and must write a statement to support the application. Full applications must also complete the Reflective Paper and the Ethical Dilemma Story before a Viva can take place.

REFLECTIVE PAPER

The Reflective Paper can also be considered a critical self evaluation of your business coaching psychology practice. You will be required to write approximately 2-3000 words, but can submit additional supporting materials if you wish, for example appendices.

The format of the reflective paper is your choice, you can use sections and subsections, include diagrams, figures etc, provided that they support the narrative. What is important is that you go beyond description of your approach, into critical evaluation of your approach. What is your approach? Why is this the approach you have used? What is the evidence for this approach? What impact does this approach have?

Examples are available on the website and you may also wish to watch the introductory video on the website. Please note that generating your reflection through generative AI is not permitted though if you normally use AI for the purposes of inclusivity this may be permitted as a reasonable adjustment and you must discuss this with your mentor (i.e. AI used to check spelling and grammar such as grammarly, Dragon dictation is permitted).

You should include a references section at the end of the piece, using APA 7th referencing style (or similar).

ETHICAL DILEMMA STORY

The ethical dilemma story is your opportunity to demonstrate your commitment and use of ethical frameworks within your Business Coaching Psychology practice. The Ethical dilemma must consider the BPS code of ethics and conduct and give an anonymised case study for an ethical dilemma that you have experienced. For this piece there is no word limit, or formatting requirements though you should expect to write between 500-1000 words.

As with the Reflective Paper, examples are available on the website. Please note that generating your ethical dilemma story through generative AI is not permitted though if you normally use AI for the purposes of inclusivity this is permitted as a reasonable adjustment and you must discuss this with your mentor (i.e. AI used to check spelling and grammar such as grammarly, Dragon dictation is permitted).

You should include a references section at the end of the piece, using APA 7th referencing style (or similar).

VIVA

Candidates will be invited to a Viva to discuss their evidence submission and their practice as a Business Coaching Psychologist. The Viva will last approximately 1 hour and will be conducted online through Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

The Viva is structured in a similar way to a Panel Interview, there will be two assessors, yourself and usually a member of the certification team whose role is to ensure that processes are followed fairly and consistently. Most vivas will be recorded for quality assurance purposes, though your recording will be stored confidentially and will be deleted after a period of 3 months.

Your mentor would not normally attend the viva unless you specifically agree that with them. They are not allowed to ask questions or providing answers to questions from the pannelists.

The viva is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your practice, and therefore some questions will be based on your evidence submissions and cannot be given in advance.

Outcomes

We operate an 'approved' or 'not yet approved' approach in line with the ABP certification process for business psychologists. Possible outcomes from the assessment of submitted materials and viva are:

- a. Approved – you will be sent your certificate, digital badge and confirmation that you can use the post-nominals CBCP.
- b. Not yet approved – you will be offered feedback and a period of 1 year (Maximum) in which to resubmit your evidence taking into account the feedback, however you may discuss the timeframe for submission with the lead assessor.
- c. If more than 1 year has elapsed since your initial application then a further fee may become due.