

Code of Conduct for Supervisors

Introduction

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish and maintain standards for supervisors and to inform their individual supervisees and organisations seeking their services as well as members of the public.

Ethical standards comprise such values as integrity, competence, confidentiality and responsibility. Ashridge supervisors, in assenting to this Code, accept their responsibility to supervisees, their clients, colleagues and Ashridge. The supervisee's interest is paramount, but where supervisors have a conflict of responsibilities they have to use their considered judgment. Therefore the Code of Conduct is a framework within which to work rather than a set of instructions.

General principles

Firstly, we maintain that:

- Supervisor and supervisee enter into an equal relationship which is used intentionally for the benefit of the supervisee, and in service of the clients of the supervisee. However, the supervisor can be experienced as holding power over the supervisee, especially when evaluating the supervisee's practice, and must always ensure the informed consent of the supervisee.
- Supervisees ultimately know best what their needs are and can decide for themselves what they do or do not want, both in their private and in their professional lives; supervisees are therefore also responsible for the choices that they make and accountable for their actions.
- The responsibility of the supervisor is to give the supervisee an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of working more satisfyingly, effectively and resourcefully.
- During supervision, the goals, resources and choices of the supervisee have priority over those of the supervisor. However, ultimately, the supervisor is also endorsing and in some cases 'signing off' the supervisee's practice, and so a supervisor's responsibility includes raising any noticeable boundary issues or areas of risk in a supervisee's practice.

Code of Ethics

Issues of responsibility

- Supervisors are responsible for observing the principles embodied in this Code of Conduct.
- Supervisors accept responsibility for encouraging and facilitating the self-development of the supervisee within the supervisee's own network of relationships.
- The supervisor takes account of the developmental level, abilities and needs of the supervisee.
- The supervisor is aware of his/her/their own cultural identity and that of the supervisee and of the possible implications of any similarities and differences for the supervision.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that they are not dependent upon relationships with their supervisees for satisfying their own emotional and other needs.
- During supervision the supervisor will not engage in non-supervision relationships, such as friendship, business or sexual relationships with their supervisees. Supervisors are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between working and other relationships, and for making the boundaries as explicit as possible to the supervisee.
- Supervisors have a duty of candour as well as care, throughout the relationship but in particular when misunderstandings or mistakes happen. If the supervisor makes a mistake or something inappropriate occurs, the supervisor should undertake to discuss it, apologise if necessary and offer support and remedy without delay.
- The supervisor will cooperate in the handling of a complaints procedure if one is brought against him/her/ them, and make sure that reasonable arrangements have been made for professional liability.

Issues of competence

- Supervisors recognize the power inherent in their position: they realize that they can exert considerable influence, both consciously and unconsciously, on their supervisees and possibly also on third parties.
- Supervisors are aware of the limitations both of their supervision and their personal skills and take care not to exceed either. They refer a supervisee to a colleague, if necessary, and maintain a professional network to that end.
- Supervisors commit themselves to training in supervision and undertake Continuing Professional Development throughout their careers.
- Supervisors monitor their supervision work through regular supervision by professionally competent supervisors, and are able to account to individual supervisees, colleagues, professional bodies and client organizations for what they do and why. Supervisors speak about it with their own supervisor if they believe something has gone wrong, in their own supervision but also in other supervision that they know about.
- Supervisors monitor the limits of their own competence.
- Supervisors along with their employers and organization clients, have a responsibility to themselves and their supervisees to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and ability to help their supervisees. They must be able to identify any situation in which their personal resources have become depleted to the extent that they must seek help and/or withdraw from supervision activities whether temporarily or permanently.

Code of Practice

This Code of Practice is intended to provide more specific information and guidance in the implementation of the principles embodied in the Code of Ethics.

Management of the work

- Supervisors should inform supervisees as appropriate about their training and qualifications, and the methods they use.
- Supervisors should clarify with supervisees the number and duration of sessions and level of fees. They should also explore a supervisee's own expectations of what is involved in supervision with him/her/them.
- Supervisors should gain their supervisee's permission before conferring with other people about their supervisee. All reports about the supervisee to third parties should be shared and worked through with the supervisee first.
- Supervisors should abstain from using any of the information that they have obtained during supervision for their own personal gain or benefit, except in the context of their own development as a supervisor.
- If there is another internal client or sponsor (e.g. a line manager), supervisors must ensure before the supervision starts that all parties have the same information concerning the goal and structure of the supervision and the intended working method. The supervision can progress only if there is agreement between them with respect to its goals and structure. If there is any change in the situation or the assignment, the supervisor formally revises the arrangements with all parties.
- Supervisors who become aware of a conflict between their obligations to a supervisee and their obligation to the helping professions (including their 'sign-off' or formal endorsement of a supervisee's practice) or an organization employing them, will make explicit the nature of the loyalties and responsibilities involved.
- In situations where supervisors have a difference of opinion with the supervisee or other involved parties, they will maintain a reasonable attitude and keep dialogue open.
- Supervisors work with supervisees to terminate supervision when the supervisees have received the help they sought, or when it is apparent that supervision is no longer helping them.

Confidentiality

- Supervisors regard all information concerning the supervisee – received directly, indirectly or from any other source – as confidential. They protect their supervisees and the supervisees' clients against the use of personal information and against its publication unless this is authorised by the supervisee or required by law.
- Treating information 'in confidence' means not revealing it to any other person or through any public medium, except to those on whom supervisors rely for their own confidential support and supervision.
- If supervisors believe that a supervisee could cause danger to others, they will advise the supervisee that they may break confidentiality and take appropriate action to warn individuals or the authorities.

Advertising/Public Statements

- The supervisor obtains the agreement of the supervisee before using the name of the supervisee's organization or other information that can identify the supervisee as a reference.
- Supervisors do not advertise or display an affiliation with an organization in a manner that falsely implies sponsorship or verification by that organization.
- Supervisors do not make false, exaggerated, or unfounded claims about what supervision will achieve.