

TANDEM COACHING ACADEMY

# The MCQ 2027 Decision Guide

For credentialed coaches deciding between Credit for Prior Learning and the Standard Path

WHO IT IS FOR

Active ACC, PCC, and MCC holders

WHAT IT COVERS

Timeline, paths, eligibility, action plan

DEADLINE

January 1, 2027

*A working document for coaches navigating the single most consequential ICF change of the decade. Read it once, decide your path, and move.*

PREPARED BY CHERIE SILAS, MCC AND ALEX KUDINOV, MCC

Edition: April 2026

[tandemcoach.co/mcq](https://tandemcoach.co/mcq)

# What Is Changing, and Why It Matters to You

In April 2026, the International Coaching Federation published the Mentor Coach Qualification (MCQ) Handbook and confirmed two hard dates that reshape how every ICF-accredited program and every credentialed coach conducts mentor coaching.

## DATE 1

### January 1, 2027

**MCQ required for all mentor coaches of credential candidates**

Any coach who mentors ACC, PCC, or MCC candidates must hold the MCQ at the matching level. This applies to coaches practicing independently, and to every mentor coach listed against an ICF-accredited Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 program.

## DATE 2

### April 1, 2027

**Performance Evaluation replaced by formative evaluation**

The single-recording Performance Evaluation for ACC and PCC Portfolio candidates is retired. The qualified mentor coach now validates readiness through a Session Observation Form per 1:1 session and a cumulative Competency Review Form at engagement close.

## Who is directly affected

- **Practicing mentor coaches.** If you mentor credential candidates today, you need the MCQ by January 1, 2027, or you cannot continue to be listed as a mentor coach.
- **Coaches inside ICF-accredited programs.** Every 1:1 mentor coach named on a program's ICF accreditation must hold MCQ at the matching level by the same date.
- **Coaches planning to mentor.** If mentor coaching is part of your three-year plan, MCQ is no longer optional. It is the qualification that permits the work.
- **Coaches renewing credentials.** Your own renewal mentor coach must hold MCQ at your level. Confirm before booking.

**The stakes for program operators.** Level 2 (PCC) accredited programs need every 1:1 mentor on staff to hold MCQ-PCC by the deadline. A Level 1 mentor who only holds MCQ-ACC cannot serve PCC candidates, and ACC mentoring does not carry forward if the student continues to the PCC level. A single missing qualification disrupts your program.

# The Transition Timeline at a Glance

SEPT 2024	<b>Mentor Coaching Competencies published</b> Six competencies across four domains – Foundation, Process Management, Client Development, and Group Mentor Coaching – define what the MCQ evaluates against. Every MC-aligned education hour must map to this framework.
APRIL 2026	<b>MCQ Handbook published, two paths confirmed</b> ICF releases the MCQ Handbook with Standard Path (41+ hrs, 50% sync) and Credit for Prior Learning (10 hrs + evidence). Introductory application fee window opens: \$50 member, \$125 non-member.
MID 2026	<b>Advanced Accreditations open</b> Applications expected to open for Advanced Accreditation in Mentor Coaching (for programs) and Advanced Accreditation in Coaching Supervision. Separate from the individual MCQ. No firm date announced.
JAN 1, 2027	<b>MCQ required – hard deadline</b> All mentor coaches of credential candidates must hold MCQ at the matching credential level. Programs may not list a non-MCQ mentor coach against their ICF accreditation from this date forward.
MARCH 31, 2027	<b>Introductory fee window closes</b> Last day for the \$50 member / \$125 non-member application fee. Apply before this date to lock in the lower fee across all levels you qualify for in one application.
APRIL 1, 2027	<b>Formative evaluation replaces Performance Evaluation</b> Application fees rise to \$125 member / \$200 non-member. Performance Evaluation recordings no longer accepted for ACC or PCC Portfolio candidates. Skills validation moves to qualified mentor coaches using the Session Observation and Competency Review Forms.

**Transition rule.** Credential candidates who complete their application *before* April 1, 2027 may still use the Performance Evaluation pathway. Candidates completing *on or after* April 1, 2027 must use the new formative pathway through enhanced mentor coaching.

# The Two Paths to MCQ

Both paths lead to the same MCQ designation with the same standing. The difference is how you demonstrate readiness: structured coursework, or a combination of shorter coursework plus documented mentor coaching practice.

Requirement	Standard Path	Credit for Prior Learning
<b>Credential prerequisite</b>	Active PCC, MCC, or renewed ACC	Active PCC, MCC, or renewed ACC
<b>Mentor coaching education</b>	Minimum 41 hours aligned to the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies	Minimum 10 hours aligned to the same competencies
<b>Synchronous requirement</b>	At least 50% should be synchronous	None – may be fully asynchronous
<b>Evaluation training (BARS / Markers)</b>	May be embedded within the 41 hours	Separate and additional – does not count toward the 10 hours
<b>Evidence of prior practice</b>	Not required	Five mentor coaching clients who earned credentials in past 3 years, <b>OR</b> a letter from an ICF-accredited provider verifying 5+ mentored students in past 3 years
<b>Best fit</b>	Coaches building a mentor practice from scratch, or those who prefer structured, synchronous training	Experienced mentors who can document practice, or coaches short on calendar who need the fastest compliant route

## What the paths really cost you – calendar, not just dollars

### CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

# 10 hours

+ BARS or Markers training, taken separately through ICF

- ✓ Finishable in two focused weeks at an asynchronous pace
- ✓ Evidence assembled from existing mentor coaching practice
- ✓ Lowest calendar load for credentialed practicing coaches

### STANDARD PATH

# 41+ hours

Evaluation training may be embedded within the hours

- ✓ Structured cohort with synchronous practice and feedback
- ✓ Evidence of practice not required
- ✓ Best for coaches formalizing a new mentor coaching track

**One application fee, multiple levels.** Whichever path you take, a single MCQ application fee covers every level you qualify for at the same time (ACC, PCC, MCC). Evaluation training, however, is completed separately for each level.

# The Decision Flowchart

Answer the three questions below in order. Your path reveals itself.

1

**Do you hold an active PCC, MCC, or renewed ACC credential?**

**No.** You are not yet eligible for either path. Your first step is credentialing or renewal. MCQ returns to your planning once your credential is active.

**Yes.** Continue to question 2.

2

**Have you personally mentored five or more coaches in the past three years, or could you obtain an attestation letter from an ICF-accredited program where you served as a mentor coach?**

**Yes.** Credit for Prior Learning is likely the faster path. Continue to question 3.

**No.** The Standard Path fits your situation. Plan for 41+ hours of mentor coaching education plus separate BARS or Markers training. Best to begin before October 2026 to land comfortably ahead of January 1, 2027.

3

**For CPL: can you complete 10 hours of MC-aligned education plus the separate BARS or Markers course for each level you want, by January 1, 2027?**

**Yes.** Credit for Prior Learning is your path. Enroll in a 10-hour program aligned to the 2024 MC Competencies and complete BARS or Markers on ICF's schedule for the level you are qualifying for.

**No.** Your timeline is tight but recoverable. Async 10-hour programs can be finished inside two focused weeks. Start the education first; BARS or Markers can run in parallel with your application.

**Which level to apply for.** Apply for every level you are eligible for, at the same time. The application fee is flat, so there is no cost penalty to adding MCQ-PCC alongside MCQ-ACC if both fit. The only separate expense per level is the relevant BARS or Markers training.

# CPL Eligibility - 8-Question Self-Assessment

Answer honestly. Yes or no, no in-betweens. Your score is at the bottom.

<b>1</b>	<b>I hold an active PCC or MCC credential, or an ACC that has been renewed at least once.</b> <i>ICF requires an active credential at or above ACC-renewed for MCQ eligibility on either path.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>2</b>	<b>In the past three years, I have provided mentor coaching, either one-to-one or in group, to five or more coaches.</b> <i>Count discrete coaches mentored, not sessions. Group participants count individually.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>3</b>	<b>At least some of those mentored coaches subsequently earned an ICF credential at the ACC, PCC, or MCC level.</b> <i>Not strictly required, but strongly supports the CPL narrative.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>4</b>	<b>I can produce a list with names, engagement dates, and approximate hours for each of the mentored coaches.</b> <i>ICF may request this as supporting evidence for your application.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>5</b>	<b>If my direct client count falls short, I have served as a mentor coach through an ICF-accredited coach training program.</b> <i>An accredited program attestation can substitute for the 5-clients evidence.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>6</b>	<b>That program can provide a signed attestation letter on letterhead confirming my mentor coaching role and the number of students mentored.</b> <i>See the next page for a template you can send.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>7</b>	<b>I can realistically complete 10 hours of MC-aligned education plus the required BARS or Markers training for each level before January 1, 2027.</b> <i>BARS is a one-day course. PCC Markers training runs 40 hours through ICF.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>8</b>	<b>The coaches I have mentored were at, or training toward, the ICF credential level I want MCQ qualification for.</b> <i>MCQ is granted per level. Evidence at the PCC level supports MCQ-PCC, not MCQ-MCC.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

## Reading your answers

- 7-8 Yes:** Credit for Prior Learning fits. Enroll in a 10-hour program, assemble your evidence pack, and file your application before March 31, 2027 to capture the introductory fee.
- 4-6 Yes:** CPL is within reach with one gap to close. The most common gaps are the attestation letter and the 10-hour education. Handle both in the next 60 days.
- 1-3 Yes:** Standard Path fits better. Plan 41+ hours of mentor coaching education starting no later than Q3 2026, plus BARS or Markers at the level you want.
- 0 Yes on Q1:** Credentialing comes first. Both paths remain closed until your ACC is renewed, or you hold an active PCC or MCC.

# The Attestation Letter, Explained

If you fall short of five directly mentored clients in the past three years, ICF accepts a substitute: a signed letter from an ICF-accredited coaching education provider attesting that you provided mentor coaching to at least five of their students in that period.

## What ICF requires in the letter

- The provider's name, accreditation designation, and letterhead.
- Your full name as it appears on your ICF record.
- The role you served (mentor coach, group mentor coach, or both).
- The period of service, with start and end dates inside the past three years.
- Confirmation that you mentored **five or more students** in that period through the program.
- Signature of the Program Director or the ICF Director of Education for that program. Digital signatures are acceptable.

## Sample request email – adapt to your provider

**Subject:** Attestation letter request for ICF MCQ application (CPL)

Dear [Program Director name],

I am applying for the ICF Mentor Coach Qualification (MCQ) via the Credit for Prior Learning pathway and I need an attestation letter from [Program name] confirming my service as a mentor coach in your program.

Per ICF requirements, the letter should state that I provided mentor coaching to at least five students through [Program name] within the past three years. I am happy to supply any supporting records that help you prepare the letter.

**My details for the letter:**

Full name on ICF record: [Your full name]

ICF member number: [Number]

Active credential: [ACC / PCC / MCC]

Role in program: [Mentor coach / Group mentor coach]

Period of service: [Start month/year] to [Current or end month/year]

Approximate students mentored in that period: [Number]

If helpful, I can provide a roster of cohorts and students for your reference. Please issue the letter on program letterhead with the signature of the Program Director or ICF Director of Education. A digital signature is acceptable.

My ICF application window is open now and I would appreciate receiving the letter by [requested date – allow 2 to 3 weeks].

Thank you for your time and your support of my MCQ application.

Warmly,

[Your full name], [Credential]

[Email] - [Phone]

**From Tandem.** If you have mentored five or more coaches through any Tandem Coaching Academy program in the past three years, we provide the attestation letter on request once you have submitted your MCQ application. Write to [hello@tandemcoach.co](mailto:hello@tandemcoach.co) with your ICF details.

# Your 90-Day Action Plan

Wherever you are on the decision, the next quarter is the window that matters. Use this plan to keep calendar pressure off the January 2027 deadline.

## MONTH 1

### Decide and confirm eligibility

- ✓ Complete the 8-question self-assessment honestly. Pick Standard Path or CPL, not both.
- ✓ Verify credential status: active PCC or MCC, or ACC renewed once.
- ✓ If CPL: draft your list of mentored coaches with dates and hours. Identify any evidence gap.
- ✓ If Standard: scan providers and pick the program that starts before October 2026 and finishes before December 2026.

## MONTH 2

### Close evidence gaps, start education

- ✓ If CPL: send your attestation letter request – use the template from the previous page. Allow two to three weeks for return.
- ✓ Enroll in your 10-hour (CPL) or 41-hour (Standard) MC-aligned education program.
- ✓ Register for the BARS or Markers training at the level you are qualifying for. PCC Markers runs 40 hours; book it early.
- ✓ Finish your first third of the education. Build consistent weekly time on calendar.

## MONTH 3

### Complete, apply, file early

- ✓ Finish the education program. Capture certificate with CCE hours and competency alignment statement.
- ✓ Complete BARS or Markers training. Keep the certificate of completion.
- ✓ Assemble your MCQ application: credential, education certificate, BARS / Markers certificate, and CPL evidence (client list or attestation letter).
- ✓ File before March 31, 2027 to capture the introductory \$50 / \$125 application fee. One fee covers all levels you qualify for.

**If the timeline slips.** If your education or evidence assembly runs into early 2027, you can still qualify before January 1, 2027 if you start within the next 60 days. After that, you are managing risk against the deadline, not planning against it.

# How Tandem Coaching Academy Helps

We built two programs so every coach – whichever path fits – has a rigorous, ICF-aligned education option. Both are led by Tandem’s two Master Certified Coaches.

LIVE NOW – \$299 THROUGH SEPT 30, 2026

## Mentor Coaching Foundations

*Program A – the 10 hours for Credit for Prior Learning*

- 10 hours asynchronous, self-paced, aligned with the 2024 ICF MC Competencies
- 15 units, 22 video lessons created by Cherie Silas, MCC and Alex Kudinov, MCC
- 15 downloadable working tools; 3 auto-scored quizzes; 6 MCC-graded written submissions
- Certificate of Completion – 10 asynchronous CCE hours, Core Competency
- Attestation letter available on request for qualifying graduates who have mentored 5+ candidates through Tandem

[tandemcoach.co/mcq/mentor-coaching-foundations](https://tandemcoach.co/mcq/mentor-coaching-foundations)

Q3 2026 – WAITLIST OPEN

## Mentor Coaching Practicum

*Program B – the 31 hours that completes the Standard Path*

- 31 hours blended: 10 async + 21 synchronous, exceeding ICF’s 50% sync minimum
- Paired with Program A = 41 total hours of MC-specific education = Standard Path complete
- Live practicum: observed mentor coaching, feedback delivery, group MC facilitation, form calibration
- Embedded ACC and MCC BARS training – counts within the 41 hours
- Formative evaluation across 4 waves using the Session Observation and Competency Review Forms

[tandemcoach.co/mcq](https://tandemcoach.co/mcq) – join the Program B waitlist



### Cherie Silas, MCC

Co-founder and CEO. ICF MCC since 2019, ACTC, CEC, CTC, EMCC ESIA. Has personally mentored 200+ ICF credential candidates across ACC, PCC, and MCC levels. Co-author of

*Enterprise Agile Coaching* (2021).



### Alex Kudinov, MCC

Co-founder and Managing Director. ICF MCC with a decade leading accredited ACC and PCC programs. Teaching specialty: the rigorous evaluation side of mentor coaching – formative appraisal, evidence-based feedback, BARS and Markers calibration.

### NEXT STEP

## Read the full MCQ hub

Program details, the complete competency map, the new evaluation forms, engagement rules, and FAQs live at the hub page.

[tandemcoach.co/mcq](https://tandemcoach.co/mcq)

Questions? [hello@tandemcoach.co](mailto:hello@tandemcoach.co)

Sources: ICF Mentor Coach Qualification Handbook (2026) and ICF MCQ launch announcement, April 13, 2026.