



WABC[®] Guidelines

For Researchers
Investigating
Business-Coaching-
Related Topics

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PREAMBLE

As part of our goal to apply the highest standards to business coaching, the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches (WABC) constantly seeks robust research to enhance our evidence base on “what works” or “what is promising” in contemporary business coaching worldwide, while also considering the professional expertise/expert opinion of business coaching professionals.

Therefore, WABC is committed to engaging in or being affiliated with research that is based on rigorous, systematic and objective procedures to obtain robust knowledge relevant to business coaching practices, programs and standards. This commitment is supported by WABC’s value of “a spirit of progress and relentless self-improvement,” which is both strategic and evolutionary in nature and serves to support “renewal, innovation and high quality” within business coaching.

These research guidelines are intended to provide practical suggestions and guidance for maintaining standards, integrity and research ethics to anyone conducting research on business coaching using WABC members as research subjects; using WABC’s policies, practices, programs or outcomes as research models; or conducting any other research in partnership with or on behalf of WABC.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

These guidelines are appropriate for *any* researchers from any institutions or organizations of any kind, WABC strategic partners and WABC members. Please note that these guidelines do not replace any or all applicable research guidelines or policies that researchers who are affiliated with external organizations must abide by. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, universities, research institutions, government agencies or private organizations.

DEFINITIONS

EVIDENCE-BASED: Within the literature there are many definitions of what constitutes “evidence-based” or “evidence-influenced” practice. The development of evidence-based policy and practice is a conscientious move away from a stance that is primarily based on personal or professional opinion, conjecture or past practice to one that is based on concepts or findings that have been rigorously evaluated and tested against the best available empirical evidence. Such evaluations and testing include systematic reviews that find, evaluate and synthesize the results of all relevant research.

HUMAN PARTICIPATION: This refers to the participation of people (human beings) in the research project through direct contribution to such instruments as interviews or surveys or indirectly through observation or the use of their authored material.

RESEARCH: A clear and concise definition of what constitutes “research” within the business coaching context includes any investigation, exploration or experimentation that intends to gain knowledge, understanding and insight into one or many aspects of business coaching context, practices, processes or outcomes.

Examples of possible business coaching research projects would include, but are not limited to:

- Market research, which looks at current trends, market segmentation, consumer preferences, etc.
- Program evaluations, which look at program efficacy, cost, value and alternatives, etc.
- Case studies, which include in-depth analysis and examination of individuals, groups, or organizations, the context in which they reside and their characteristics with the purpose of better understanding an event or a situation
- Survey research, which involves asking closed and/or open-ended questions of research respondents in order to answer one or more research questions
- Experimental research, which attempts to establish cause and effect through manipulation of cause (i.e., treatment) and control of extraneous factors
- Meta-analysis, which involves the combining of statistical results of existing research outcomes to estimate the size of and relationship between variables

RESEARCH ETHICS: These are the core principles guiding research from its conception and implementation through to the publication of results.

CORE RESEARCH PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

WABC cannot address each possible research plan as they are individually designed for each investigation. The nature of the research question(s), the type of data sought (qualitative or quantitative) as well as practical needs and researcher experience will dictate what the research will look like and its methodology. Therefore, WABC provides a set of core research principles and guidelines that cover the essential elements of what constitutes valid and ethical research practices.

Core Principles

- Respect for persons (treating participants with respect and consideration)
- Concern for welfare (maintaining individual privacy and control of information about a person)
- Justice (treating all participants fairly and equitably)

Administration

- Researchers who wish to involve WABC in their research must participate in WABC's "Request for Consideration Process" (see the "Involving WABC in Your Research" section below)
- Researchers must identify and agree upon the ownership of research data and primary research materials
- Researchers have an ethical duty to safeguard from misuse or wrongful disclosure all information entrusted to them, thus protecting personally identifying information and maintaining participant confidentiality. Therefore, researchers must safeguard all potentially identifiable information for the full information life cycle (i.e., collection, use, dissemination, retention and disposal).
- Researchers must ensure that all research data, reports and records are properly secured against unauthorized access, viewing, theft or loss
- Researchers must maintain research data, reports and records for a period of five years after research publication/distribution

CORE RESEARCH PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

Ethical Practices

- Researchers must abide by the WABC Code of Business Coaching Ethics and Integrity
- Researchers must appropriately manage real or perceived conflicts of interest that could abuse participant trust. For example, a researcher may hold dual roles as researcher and business coach, therapist, advisor or employer, thereby creating the potential for conflicts, power imbalances or undue influence on relationships with and the decision making of participants (re: consent, independence and participation). Therefore:
 - Researchers must identify, minimize or otherwise manage real or perceived conflicts of interest
 - Researchers must disclose to WABC and to research participants any real or perceived interpersonal, institutional, financial, academic or other conflicts of interest
 - Researchers must withdraw from any research project where the researcher role unduly compromises participant trust
 - Researchers must respect and protect research-participant rights, which include informed consent and protection of privacy since the collection, use and disclosure of personal information may negatively impact research participants or their organizations. Therefore, researchers must provide:
 - a research information sheet and contract form that clearly outlines the purpose of the research, expected benefits, expected duration and procedures, all reasonably foreseeable risks to participants, how the data will be used, how the data will be protected, any limits to confidentiality, any incentives to participate, participant rights as they pertain to declining to participate or to withdraw at any point in the research process and researcher contact information
 - an area on the sheet that allows participants to formally acknowledge (by signing or marking a box) that they have read the research information sheet, that they fully understand their rights and that they agree to participate in the research as outlined in the research information sheet

Methodology

- Researchers must adopt a research method that is “fit for purpose” and appropriate to the aims of the research and the research question(s)
- Researchers must maintain an appropriately explicit “audit trail” from data collection through to analysis and interpretation to allow confidence in the efficacy of their results
- Researchers must include a literature review of the key literature and best available research evidence on the subject(s) being researched within the domain being examined
- Researchers must critically appraise the research evidence for trustworthiness and applicability to the research question and the business coaching profession. This allows the inclusion of non-academic or professional publications (gray literature) within the review.
- Researchers should focus on literature that has been consciously, systematically and explicitly evaluated in terms of efficacy and the achievement of desired outcomes
- Researchers must link the research evidence to improved business coaching policy, practice and/or training

Proper Attribution

- Researchers must ensure that all participating authors are appropriately identified and listed in any publication or oral reporting of the work
- Researchers must acknowledge the role of others in the research
- Researchers must seek permission to use photographs, tables or diagrams, etc. that they themselves did not create or do not otherwise own
- Researchers must appropriately paraphrase and cite other’s work
- Researchers must utilize referencing formats, such as but not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition

Distribution

- Researchers must obtain permission(s) for distribution, copying and/or republishing
- Researchers must protect and abide by all applicable intellectual property rights
- Researchers must ensure clear, accountable and responsible reporting of all research and findings

Other Research Ethical Codes

Here are some examples of other codes of research ethics:

American Psychological Association

<http://www.apa.org/research/responsible/index.aspx>

Australian Government: Australian Research Council

<http://www.arc.gov.au/codes-and-guidelines>

British Psychological Society

http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code_of_human_research_ethics.pdf

Purpose & Benefit of WABC's Involvement

As previously mentioned, WABC is constantly seeking robust research to inform our evidence base on “what works” or “what is promising” in contemporary business coaching worldwide, while also considering the professional expertise/expert opinion of business coaching professionals.

WABC's involvement is highly valuable to you as a researcher:

- WABC can provide our expert opinion of the relevancy and legitimacy of the focus of your inquiry
- WABC can provide a dissemination route for the results

Determining Suitability

Because of the wide range of research projects being undertaken at any given time in the marketplace worldwide, WABC has developed a vetting process to review and determine suitable projects. (See the “Request for Consideration Process” below.)

Right to Refuse or Delay

While WABC supports engaging in or being affiliated with research, we have the right to refuse or delay research proposals for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

- Research proposals that do not meet WABC's and/or other ethical research standards
- Research that conflicts with WABC's ethical and professional standards of practice
- Research that is deemed not to be in the best interests of WABC or its members
- Research that may overload WABC and/or its members within any given time period

Additionally, unless WABC has entered into a formal agreement to co-partner or co-sponsor a research project, we do not provide research funding nor will we act as an ethics committee for any research proposals submitted to or research accepted by WABC.



INVOLVING WABC IN YOUR RESEARCH

REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION PROCESS

If you'd like to request WABC's involvement in your research, please *first* review our general process below. The Request for Consideration process can take up to six weeks.

1. Researcher emails WABC asking for the *Request to Involve WABC in Your Research* form.
2. WABC emails the form to the researcher usually within two business days.
3. Researcher emails WABC the fully completed form (along with other requested research-related information).
4. WABC conducts an initial review of the information to determine suitability (see the "Right to Refuse or Delay" section above). This initial review is usually completed within 14 calendar days. (Please note that even if your research proposal passes through this initial review, this does not mean WABC is confirming its involvement.)
5. If the proposal is deemed suitable to proceed to a second review, WABC assigns one lead reviewer and up to two referees to review your information. While the lead reviewer will be aware of your identity, your name will not be shared with the referees who will also remain anonymous to you and will not be engaging with you. This second review is usually completed within 30 calendar days. Once the review is completed, the lead reviewer collates the review findings, and WABC informs you of the decision.
6. If the proposal is not deemed suitable to proceed to a second review, you will be informed of the decision and the reason for it by email.
7. If WABC accepts your proposal, then depending on the nature of WABC's involvement, you and WABC would create the next steps together.

Confidentiality of Material

WABC takes confidentiality very seriously. Strict confidentiality agreements have been signed by all individuals involved in reviewing your information.

Retention of Material

WABC will keep the material you submit in a secure online archive. The material will not be used for anything other than review purposes without your express written permission. At no time will your material be made available to anyone outside WABC's review process.

Your Next Steps

We very much appreciate your interest in these guidelines. If you'd like WABC to consider becoming involved in your research project, we'd enjoy hearing from you.

Please **[click here to contact us today](#)** and ask for the *Request to Involve WABC in Your Research* form.



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