

UNITED STATES FENCING COACHES ASSOCIATION



USFCA Code of Ethical Conduct
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USFCA CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT & APPENDIX A & B

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Introduction

The United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA) strives to ensure that its members uphold the highest ethical principles when coaching athletes and professionally managing fencing programs and clubs. The organization must have means to establish, educate, and enforce such standards for member fencing coaches. This is to earn the trust of athletes and their families, and ensure that the fencing coach's profession in the United States be respected and credible to society (Association for Applied Sport Psychology Ethical Principles and Standards.).¹

Preamble

The *Code of Ethical Conduct & Appendix A* for the USFCA memorializes the principles and standards to be upheld by its member fencing coaches, be they active, retired, emeritus, or otherwise associated with the sport of fencing. It represents the aspirations of all members and defines these ethics as principles for right action within the sport of fencing. These important principles are not laws, but standards to be fully understood and upheld by every member coach. They are intended to guide coaches individually and collectively to maintain the highest level of professionalism, ethical conduct, and to teach and model ethical behavior in their fencing programs.

Principles

The following statements identify the principles by which the USFCA expects each of its member coaches to uphold. *Appendix A: Standards of Responsible Conduct* to this Code includes a detailed discussion for each enumerated principle, and includes the following: (1) a description to define each area, (2) the context for the ethical standards to be upheld, and (3) specific, but not exhaustive, examples of issues related to each principle to clarify the spirit of the rule and the overall intent of the USFCA with respect to the Code of Ethical Conduct. The intent of this detailed Appendix is to serve as clarity and context for member coaches.

1. Ethical Social Conduct and Professional Integrity: Because of their importance to and impact upon the fencing community, member coaches are responsible to hold themselves to the highest standards of professional and personal integrity. To that end, member coaches should strive to maintain a positive, professional environment by using effective and clear communication, promoting good sportsmanship, maintaining a professional and courteous demeanor, and by specifically avoiding of abusive and/or negative behavior in their dealings.

¹ The AASP *Ethical Principles and Standards* served as a general model for the structure and descriptive narrative of the *USFCA Code of Ethical Conduct and Appendix A: Standards of Responsible Conduct*.

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2. Athlete Safety: Coaches ensure the safety of their athletes, do no harm to their athletes, and uphold the integrity of the coaching profession by not engaging in conduct which is unlawful or abusive in any form.²
3. Informed Consent (Sport Training):³ Coaches obtain *informed consent* from their athletes regarding activities and risks involved before agreeing to participate in any aspect of sport training with said athletes.
4. Informed Consent (Media):³ Coaches obtain *informed consent* from their athletes regarding any potential use of personal information and/or physical representation for any purpose related to their participation in the sport of fencing.
5. Conflict of Interest:⁴ Coaches foster an atmosphere of trust with their athletes, colleagues and others, such that the coach's professional actions and motivations are transparent at all times. It is essential for member coaches to recognize that *conflicts of Interest* can occur, and that it is their responsibility to minimize the ill-effects by honestly recognizing, understanding, and avoiding such conflicts.
6. Organizational Professional Relationships: Coaches maintain legal compliance with the rules and regulations of any domestic and/or international organizations related to the sport of fencing in which they are a member. It is important for a member coach in the USFCA to maintain cooperative and positive relationships within all of their respective organizations.
7. Research Integrity: Coaches ensure any scientific research they undertake is accomplished in an environment of *Informed Consent*, is compliant with *SafeSport* regulation, USFCA policy, or other applicable rule or law, and that all prepared findings are produced as a result of professional and academic ethical standards⁵.
8. Risk Management and Professional Knowledge and Competence: Coaches are highly knowledgeable and competent at managing risk and avoiding harm at all times in their training facilities, such that they create a positive environment that ensures safety during instruction, training, competitions, or any other related activity. Coaches have a responsibility to model and teach ethical behavior within their fencing programs to ensure safety and positive behavior. This responsibility involves an ethical decision-making process that is well defined based on ethical standards.

² See U.S. Center for SafeSport: <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/response-and-resolution/safesport-code/>

³ See sections 3-4: *Informed consent* in Appendix A.

⁴ See section 5 in Appendix A, also Appendix B: *Conflict of Interest for Examiners*

⁵ An addendum policy on the *Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects* to be developed by the Ethics Committee

9. Financial Responsibility and Business Professionalism: Coaches are transparent with their financial activities, such that any arrangements are well described and transcribed, documented, and effected without financial malfeasance.
10. Inclusion, Diversity, and Non-Discrimination: Coaches promote the sport of fencing to all persons equally and are free of bias in their interactions with athletes and others such that the community can thrive. As such, a member coach must not engage in any form of discrimination as defined by local, state, and federal laws, and in accordance with *USOPC*⁶ policies.
11. Confidentiality: Coaches are responsible for holding any information regarding their athletes and/or any associated individuals in the highest confidence, such that the information cannot be misused with damaging consequences.
12. Policy on Harassment: Coaches act as stewards of ethical conduct among the fencing community. As such, a member coach must not engage in any form of harassment in person or on-line as defined by local, state, and federal laws, and as defined by *SafeSport* and *USA Fencing*⁷.
13. Mandatory Reporting: Coaches act in accordance with their status as mandatory reporters by *SafeSport*. They are also responsible for reporting ethical misconduct in any form to the appropriate authorities, either directly or anonymously, pursuant to the requirements and procedures established by the USFCA⁸.

Implementation

The *Code of Ethical Conduct and Appendix A & B* will be provided to new members of the USFCA during the membership application process. The *Code of Ethical Conduct and Appendix A & B* will be updated and posted annually on-line via the USFCA website to all active members and those members who have received any level of coaching certification as a result of participation with the USFCA during their lifetime.

The Applicability of the *Code of Ethical Conduct & Appendix A & B*

The *Code of Ethical Conduct* applies to all member coaches and administrators of the USFCA. All member coaches are subject to upholding ethical principles and following the standards as stated in this code. They are also subject to standards as required by other

⁶ See U.S.O.P.C.: <https://www.usopc.org/diversity-equity-inclusion>

⁷ See USA Fencing: https://www.usafencing.org/rules-compliance#More_cs7a

⁸ An addendum detailing the procedure for reporting to be developed by the Ethics Committee

governing bodies such as: *USA Fencing*, *SafeSport & MAAPP*, *United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)*, *Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE)*, *Academie d'Armes Internationale (AAI)*, *National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)*, and the *USA Fencing Referee's Commission*⁹. Member coaches have the responsibility to review the *Code of Ethical Conduct* regularly.

While a coach's active status may change over time (e.g., retirement, emeritus, guest coaches), the esteem they hold in the community can last a lifetime. Accordingly, as an individual's status or activities change within the organization, the applicability of some of the standards detailed below may change. The USFCA and the Ethics Committee encourage all coaches commit to lifelong standard of ethical behavior, no matter their status¹⁰.

The Role of the Ethics Committee in the Enforcement of the Code¹¹

The USFCA Ethics Committee is an advisory committee for the USFCA Executive Committee (EC). Its primary role is to develop procedures and training for promoting ethical principles and encourage compliance by member coaches. Its secondary role is to review possible reported ethical misconduct by member coaches on behalf of the EC and make recommendations regarding how to address the issue in the context of the USFCA bylaws. According to the bylaws of the USFCA, the Ethics Committee may currently recommend the following sanctions: *expulsion, suspension, probation, reprimand, warning, or direction to repair, replace, or reimburse*¹². See the *2022 USFCA Bylaws: Article II, Section 8* (United States Fencing Coaches Association) .

Should the Ethics Committee be presented with an issue that should be properly investigated by *SafeSport*, law enforcement, or other investigation authorities, it will be forwarded to those appropriate authorities. The Ethics Committee has no authority in cases that are under investigation by the above organizations, but may only serve as mandatory reporters.

⁹ List of governing bodies for the USFCA listed below in bibliography.

¹⁰ An addendum companion training courses: *Ethics for Fencing Coaches and Ethics for Leadership* to be developed by the Ethics Committee.

¹¹ An addendum document: *Ethics Committee Role and Procedures Manual* to be developed by the Ethics Committee.

¹² Ineligibility, censure, remedial training are, to date, not part of the current bylaws and unapproved by the membership but will be proposed additions by the Ethics committee for future revisions.

APPENDIX A:

1. **Ethical Social Conduct and Professional Integrity**

Because of their importance to and impact upon the fencing community, member coaches hold themselves to the highest standards of professional and personal integrity. Relationships developed by coaches with other members of the fencing community come in the form of, but are not limited to, physical instruction, academic education, business communication, collegial relationships, tournament coaching, refereeing, and parental and team interactions. During these interactions, a member coach should strive to maintain a positive, professional environment by using effective and clear communication, promote good sportsmanship, maintain a professional and courteous demeanor, and specifically avoid abusive and/or negative behavior in their dealings.

While it is not the responsibility of the Ethics Committee to monitor the day-to-day social conduct of coaches, the USFCA has charged the Committee with a duty to respond to alleged, significant ethical misconduct or reported patterns of unethical behavior in its member coaches. This duty includes, but is not limited to, the taking in of complaints, investigation of allegations, and a recommendation of action in response to the alleged misconduct to the USFCA Executive Committee. This duty may require the Committee to report incidents of unethical behavior to *SafeSport* or law enforcement if not otherwise reported.

Specific areas of concern as it relates to ethical social conduct for coaches include the following:

- Member coaches must avoid harm to others and not engage in any form of abusive behavior toward: all athletes, parents/guardians, referees, colleagues, staff, organization and authorities' personnel.¹³
- Member coaches understand proper reporting requirements (*SafeSport*), as it relates to relationships with their staff and others and must report abuse regardless of relationship to others.
- Member coaches do not make groundless allegations about others when reporting on ethical matters without collaborating evidence and witnesses, or use rumor and aspersions to damage another individual.

¹³ See *SafeSport*, *MAAPP*, *Referee Commissions Code of Ethics*, *USA Fencing Code of Conduct* listed in bibliography.

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- Member coaches do not engage in undermining colleagues through in-person or on-line damaging statements for personal gain (e.g., does not engage in intentional student “poaching”, or bad mouthing another coach, defamation).
- Member coaches do not engage in cheating or encouraging and enabling their athletes to violate the rules and regulations of the sport.
- Member coaches ensure any personal problems do not adversely affect their professional interactions. Coaches should be educated on issues that may affect professional relationships (e.g., substance abuse, addictions, mental health conditions).
- Member coaches understand professional conduct when using social media (e.g., posting pictures of students and *informed consent* from parents and fencers, appropriate language to use on-line and professional communications, not engaging in *cyber-bullying* or *trolling*).

2. **Athlete Safety (SafeSport, Law Enforcement, and Ethical Conduct)**

As members of the coaching community, our essential duty to athletes is to ensure their safety, to not do harm, and to uphold the integrity of our profession by not engaging in unlawful conduct or abuse in all its forms (Sexual, Physical, Emotional, Harassment, Bullying, Hazing). The *United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC)* requires all world Sport Organizations to adhere to *SafeSport* standards and training for protecting athletes. All members of the USFCA must adhere to the standards of *SafeSport* and are subject to the local, state and federal laws that govern the jurisdictions in which they provide coaching services, or run their fencing clubs.

The USFCA does not have jurisdiction over the investigation and sanctioning processes for violations of these standards or laws; only adjudicating non-*SafeSport*/law enforcement ethical referrals. However, a USFCA member can, in accordance with USFCA Bylaws, be concurrently sanctioned for violations of *SafeSport* or laws. This may mean suspension or expulsion of membership if being investigated, or consequently, banned for a violation¹⁴.

3. **Informed Consent (Sport Training)**

In all activities in which a fencing coach engages an athlete for instruction in sport training or other related activities (e.g., trips to tournaments, waivers, etc.), the coach requires not only ‘permission’, but ‘*Informed Consent*’. For our purposes, Informed Consent means the member coach respects and values the athlete and any legal parent/guardian by educating them as to the risks involved in the sport training.

¹⁴ Refer to 2022 USFCA Bylaws: Article V: *SafeSport* and Article|Membership, Section 10.

Whether oral or in writing, permission to participate in the sport training rises to *Informed Consent* only when it takes place before the activity begins, when it describes the risks involved, and when it ensures that the athlete and/or parent/guardian understands the full scope of what is being consented to. (For adult athletes, the coach is expected to obtain that *Informed Consent* directly from the adult, or in some cases, the adult's guardian. For minor athletes, the coach is expected to obtain Informed Consent from both the athlete and the athlete's parent/guardian.

4. **Informed Consent (Media)**

In all activities in which a fencing coach utilizes the personally identifiable information (PII) of an athlete with respect to their participation in the sport of fencing, the coach requires not only 'permission' to release that information, but the *Informed Consent* of the party as stated above in the previous section. For our purposes, *Informed Consent* means the member coach respects and values the athlete and any legal parent/guardian by educating them as to way in what the information will be utilized and/or disseminated. In this case, PII includes, but is not limited to, the following: name, age, residential address, location of the athlete, contact information, information related to a tournament the athlete participated in, results of any tournament the athlete participated in, photographs of the athlete, videos of the athlete, the athlete's personal health information acquired.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of when coaches are expected to obtain *Informed Consent* before sharing any athlete's PII:

- Membership status in any fencing group, club, organization, etc.;
- Participation in any specific fencing or associated events (class, tournament, clinic, etc.);
- The creation of material for advertising or promotion in any public document (including print media, social media, newsletter, electronic dissemination, etc.);
- The creation of any video, pictures, or other such representations; and
- All research activities involving human subjects, such as experiments, surveys, training video productions etc. These may be implemented as part of a Fencing Master's Thesis, or a training video production⁵.

5. **Conflict of Interest**

Coaches act to ensure that their professional relationships foster an atmosphere of trust with their athletes, colleagues and others, such that the Coach's professional actions and motivations are transparent at all times. Specifically, as the fencing

community is international in scope, but small in scale, it is common for many coaches to frequently work in collaboration with each other. This includes not only being trained, mentored, or employed by other coaches, but also being hired by one or more fencing clubs, or serving on boards, committees, or other administrative bodies which oversee the fencing community as a whole. In such an environment, it is reasonable to believe that, while conflicts of intent or conflicts of interest may exist, they may not be deemed inappropriate under all circumstances.

For this reason, the Ethics Committee may be consulted to ascertain the status of any such Conflict. Any recommendations made with respect to the Conflict would then be forwarded to the USFCA Executive Committee to act upon, if necessary. In the specific instance of the coaching certification process, the USFCA has already an established *Conflict of Interest* policy that will be followed¹⁵.

Ultimately, it is essential for member coaches to recognize that *Conflicts of Interest* can occur and should be minimized. A coach needs to practice transparency by honestly recognizing, understanding and avoiding Conflicts of Interest.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of Conflicts of Interest that can occur within the fencing coaches' community:

- Conflicts that may arise from financial transactions, favors, or “quid pro Quo” arrangements. Determining this is a matter of degree and the nature of arrangement (e.g., receiving gifts or other amenities in exchange for services or position not including gifts that are given as personal niceties such as birthday or holiday gifts, relationships with vendors of fencing equipment). The Ethics Committee may evaluate a questionable situation on its degree, significance, and its appropriateness.
- Conflicts that may arise from collegial, personal, and/or social relationships.
- Conflicts that may arise from mentoring, hiring, and/or training relationships.
- Conflicts that may arise from the certification process¹⁵.
- Conflicts that may arise from administrative relationships such as members of committees.

¹⁵ See Appendix B: Certification and Accreditation Board Conflict of Interest Policy.

Regarding potential COI situations, coaches are responsible for:

1. **Disclosure:** Coaches report, formally and in writing, the full details of any potential conflicts of interest to the USFCA authorities. This includes the Executive Committee, Committee Chairs, etc.¹⁶
2. **Recusal:** Coaches are responsible for recusing themselves, formally and in writing, from decisions that may create the perception of Conflict of Interest. (If serving in an administrative position, this can be done through e-mail to USFCA authorities.)
3. Coaches adhere to CAB Policy for certification as related to the *Certification and Accreditation Conflict of Interest Policy*¹² when serving on examination boards or serving as Coach Developers at NCDP clinics.
4. Coaches should be aware of promoting objective nomination procedures and diversity on committees and boards.

6. **Organizational Professional Relationships**

In order to ethically engage with the sport of fencing, Coaches must maintain legal compliance with the rules and regulations of any domestic and/or international organizations related to the sport of fencing in which they are a member. Specifically, such organizations may have organizational procedures or legal requirement to ensure compliance. It is important for a member coach in the USFCA to maintain cooperative and positive relationships within all of their respective organizations, and to operate in good faith by engaging in honest, accurate, and on-going communications. This practice will demonstrate respect for the fencing community at large, as well as for any particular organization's authority and mission statement.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples for how member coaches are encouraged to act with respect to any and all organizational professional relationships:

- Member coaches are expected to maintain legal compliance within the USFCA and with any governing bodies⁹ with which they may interact. This compliance applies to USFCA organizational business (e.g., bylaws, policies and procedures, financial, etc.)
- Member coaches are required to report unethical conduct (i.e., *SafeSport*) or violations of legal requirements.
- Member coaches do not engage in retaliatory conduct toward any reporting individuals including harassment, bullying, on-line targeting, etc.¹⁷
- Member coaches may not use organizational resources (e.g., financial) for personal use.

¹⁶ An addendum detailed procedure for reporting to be developed by the Ethics Committee.

¹⁷ An addendum: *Whistleblower Policy & Retaliation Policy* to be developed by the Ethics Committee.

- Member coaches will not falsify their credentials when applying for membership, modifying their profile, applying for employment, for equivalency certification, promoting their experience to others, or with advertising promotions (e.g., on-line or written).

7. **Research Integrity**

In the course of certification for the *Master* level of coach, candidates will be required to develop a thesis which will be reviewed and approved by the *Certification and Accreditation Board (CAB)*. A candidate may choose to engage in research to support the thesis, and in some cases, may involve using human subjects (i.e., athlete-students) to implement a study, a survey, or video support. The Ethics Committee may serve as an *Institutional Review Board (IRB)*¹⁸ for these types of theses, unless another body, such as a university, has already served the IRB role.

The thesis candidate must maintain scientific responsibility by ensuring that during the planning, implementation, and summary of their research, all human subjects involved have documented their *Informed Consent* to the candidate.¹⁹ In addition, the candidate must ensure that the research process is conducted in a manner that:

- Ensures the conduct of coaching-delivery during the research *study* does not violate safety or *SafeSport* standards and risk management.
- *Adheres to* USFCA C.A.B. & Ethics Committee policies for treating human subjects in thesis research by being ethical, appropriate, safe and minimizes invasiveness and upholds ethical treatment and safety of subjects⁵.
- Is compliant with standards of academic honesty and avoids deception in the summary or conclusions of the research.
- Provides proper documentation through citations of any and all references of supporting professional and scientific work.
- Respects the *Intellectual Property* rights involved. Specifically, the thesis and research does not:
 - involve *Plagiarism*,
 - neglect, misuse or misrepresent the work of others.
 - use A.I. with the true intent to attempt to pass off the work as the candidate's.

8. **Risk Management and Professional Knowledge and Competence**

Fencing coaches are primarily tasked with establishing and ensuring that the environment in which they instruct in fencing is safe for the athletes and others. This includes the physical facilities, as well as any training programs, rules for specific clubs or programs, and their overall approach to coaching. Safety is primary to

¹⁸ An addendum: *Institutional Review Board Procedures* to be developed by the Ethics Committee

¹⁹ See *Informed Consent* Sections 3-4.

provide a secure, welcoming, positive, and enjoyable environment. There is nothing more important to athletes, parents/guardian, and the public than to understand that all participants are safely cared for during instruction, training, competition, and associated activities.

Coaches have a responsibility to model and teach ethical behavior within their fencing programs to ensure safety and positive behavior. This responsibility involves an ethical decision-making process that is well defined based on ethical standards.

To implement this positive environment, it is essential for member coaches to be highly knowledgeable and competent of managing risk and avoiding harm at all times in training facilities. The USFCA has identified that a coach's expertise should include knowledge, training, and certification related to the following areas. This list is non-exhaustive, and may be supplemented as necessary by USFCA:

A coach will certify they have received annual training in the following areas:

- *SafeSport & M.A.A.P.P.*

A coach will require periodic training in the following areas:

- Harassment Training
- Passed background checks
- Reporting Abuse and Misconduct (via *SafeSport*)

It is recommended that a coach have knowledge and training in the following topic areas:

- Concussion Training
- Certified in CPR/First Aid/AED
- Heat illness
- Child and Adolescent Physical and Psychological Development
- Epilepsy
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental Health Conditions
- Sport Psychology
- Health and Fitness
- Para-Fencing
- Cultural Sensitivity Training

It is also recommended and may be required as part of the certification process that a coach attend periodic annual training: Continuing Education Units (CEUs) at in-person clinics (NCDP Clinics) or on-line courses offered by the USFCA.²⁰

Additionally, it is important that a coach understand the limitations of their expertise in giving medical advice and post medical emergency procedures in their clubs. Unless the member coach is also a licensed medical professional, they must always refer the athlete to seek medical professional advice. Coaches should not offer in-depth workshops or training clinics on topics without experience, or which require representation from a trained and certified professional with expertise in medical, mental health, or sport psychology (e.g., mental toughness).

9. Financial Responsibility and Business Professionalism

Member coaches take care to be professional in their financial activities, regardless of the program they serve. Whether it be in a college, club, or recreational facility (e.g., community programs such as YMCA), any financial arrangements should be well described and transcribed, documented, and without financial malfeasance. This includes financial arrangements with paying customers, other fencing programs, or with governing authorities and cover issues such as: coaching or club fees, barter or trade, negotiations, scholarships, use of loaned funds, use of USFCA funds or any special financial arrangements. Theft, embezzlement, deception in financial arrangements, unapproved removal, or purposeful damage of property is unacceptable. Deceptive advertising and promotion are also unacceptable, as it creates distrust in the coaching profession and the sport in general.

10. Inclusion, Diversity, and Non-Discrimination

Member coaches should take care to promote inclusion, diversity, and non-judgmental practices at all times. They should strive to be free of bias in their interactions with athletes and others including, but not limited to, standard non-discriminatory demographics such as those based on: gender, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, cultural, national origin, religion, disability (mental or physical), mental health, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by the law. They must not engage in unfair discrimination against athletes, parents of athletes, assistant instructors, referees, other coaches or members of governing organizations. All coaches must follow local, state and federal regulations of non-discrimination.

²⁰ USFCA National Coaches Development Program, <https://usfca.org/national-coaching-development-program/>

The following is a non-exhausted list of specific areas of concern as it relates to discrimination in coaching fencing:

- **Hiring practices** (e.g., assistant instructors): Member coaches *should* be careful to engage in fair hiring practices to give all candidates equal chance at a position. They should not unfairly engage in unfair preferential hiring procedures, such as profiling, or black-balling.
- **Recruitment**: Member college coaches must follow NCAA regulations for fairness and inclusion in recruitment (e.g., American vs. Foreign).
- **Harassment**: Member coaches must not engage in misconduct in interactions with others considered hate speech (in person or on-line), hindering development or withdrawal of equal and fair attention, retaliation against subordinates or whistleblowers¹⁷.
- **Discrimination against LGBTQ+ Community**: Member coaches must not discriminate against LGBTQ+ athletes, parents, or others with whom they may interact. Care needs to be taken to accommodate the needs of individuals within this community (e.g., preferred pro-nouns).
- **Discrimination against those with Learning Disabilities** (e.g., autism spectrum, dyslexia, attention deficit, and other learning disabilities): Member coaches should take care to educate themselves and not engage in intentional or unintentional discrimination against athletes or others with learning disabilities. The member coach seeks guidance, education and accommodation for these individuals in order to ensure fair opportunity within the sport.
- **Discrimination against those with Physical Impairments** (e.g., Para-Athletes): Member coaches should take care to educate themselves and not engage in discrimination against athletes or others with physical impairments. The member coach seeks guidance, education and accommodation for these individuals in order to ensure fair opportunity within the sport.
- **Discrimination against those with Mental Health Conditions** (e.g., Depression): Member coaches should take care to educate themselves and not engage in discrimination against athletes or others whom may have diagnosed or non-diagnosed mental health conditions. The member coach seeks guidance, education and accommodation for these individuals in order to ensure fair opportunity within the sport.

11. **Confidentiality**

Fencing coaches are privy to information about athletes, parents/guardians of athletes, and others (e.g., colleagues, assistants and staff) that are personal or financial in nature. Member coaches should understand the importance of maintaining the confidential nature of any information, such that the information can be stored securely and not be misused with damaging consequences.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances where the personal or financial information kept by coaches in confidence will be required to be kept safe:

- Member coaches should not reveal confidential personal information unless appropriate: names, addresses, emails, passwords, phone numbers, ages, SSN, financial or health information, or any information of a personal nature that can lead to misuse by others.
 - *Exception*: In the case of a medical emergency, it is acceptable to give otherwise confidential information, such as a person's name, age, address, contact information of parents/guardians, and relevant health information, to responding medical professionals in order to assist their work in ensuring the person's safety.
- Member coaches should not reveal confidential athlete's progress reports unless appropriate with others who are involved in the student's training program (e.g., parent/guardian, assistant coaches or collaborative coaches).
- Member coaches must not engage in the misuse of others' personal or financial information for their own or other's benefit:
 - *Exploitation* – Revealing information to damage, control, or coerce another person through inuendo, social interactions or social media.
 - *Extortion and "Quid pro Quo"* – Revealing information in order to extract a personal or financial benefit from an individual. Using stated or unstated arrangements to coerce an individual.
- Care must be taken in ensuring permission (*Informed Consent*) if group texting parents and students to ensure that all members of the group wish to be notified by this method, and that no individual's personal information is revealed (e.g., phone numbers).

12. Policy on Harassment, Bullying, Hazing

As stewards of ethics among the fencing community, coaches are held to the highest standard of honesty and integrity. Accordingly, member coaches must not engage in any form of harassment in person or on-line as defined by local, state and federal laws, and as defined by *SafeSport* and USA Fencing. All member coaches are required to complete USA Fencing training on *Harassment* on a periodic basis for compliance. All member coaches must also adhere to *SafeSport* requirements on avoiding harassment, bullying, and hazing.

13. Mandatory Reporting

Member coaches are considered mandatory reporters by *SafeSport*, and must comply with the policies and procedures outlined by *SafeSport* for reporting incidents. Additionally, member coaches are responsible for reporting ethical misconduct in any form to the appropriate authorities, either directly or anonymously. When witnessing or receiving reports of ethical misconduct, member coaches must not allow relationship dynamics with the person being reported to interfere with the

responsibility to report. Reporting is essential to preserving a safe environment for athletes, a positive coaching environment, and the integrity and reputation of the fencing coaching profession⁸.



US Fencing Coaches Association

Certification and Accreditation Board Conflict of Interest Policy for Examiners

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The United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA) conducts certification and educational operations with coaches teaching the Olympic Sport of fencing in the United States. Its members have the opportunity to earn higher levels of certification through apprenticeships and practical examinations, from introductory levels up to the rank of Fencing Master.

USFCA certification exams are conducted by pre-approved USCFA examiners who have been trained for this purpose. This process relies on the independence of examiners and exam objective standards. It is important to note that examiners, in applying objective exam standards, are also influenced by their viewpoints, opinions, and preferences. As a result, there is a subjective, discretionary component to all USFCA certification exams, which must not be called into question because of professional and/or personal relationships between and among the parties involved. Since USFCA exams are subject to the scrutiny of the entire fencing community, conflicts of interest can compromise the independence of exams in fact or in perception.

The world of fencing in the United States is a very close-knit community. Further, USFCA members participate in a variety of distinct roles throughout their careers and/or their daily activities. So, it is easy for conflicts of interest to arise in the contexts of USFCA exams.

To preserve, ensure and maintain the independence of the examination process, the USFCA had adopted the following Conflict of Interest Policy regarding its certification process.

USFCA Certification Process - Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy

1. This COI policy sets forth the COIs rules for the (5) levels of USFCA certification.
2. The USFCA, including its officers, board and committee members, Executive Director, employees, and members at large must comply with the rules outlined in this COI Policy.
3. Conflicts of interest are defined in many ways. For this COI Policy, a conflict of interest is any situation that may vitiate the independence of the USFCA certification process in fact and/or perception. Therefore, the USFCA must ensure the independence of its certification process and to maintain it free from the influences of outside relationships between the parties involved.
4. For COI's that have taken place in the past (e.g. former student, former employee) the statute of limitations is 5 years prior.
5. COIs may arise in a variety of circumstances in connection with the USFCA certification process. Below, is a non-exhaustive list of the parties involved.
 - Examiners
 - Candidates for practical examination
 - Thesis candidates
 - Candidate's mentor(s)
 - Members of the Certification and Accreditation Board
 - Other examiners involved in the same exam (e.g., husband and wife examiners on the same commission)
6. The COI Policy classifies COIs into two categories:
 - Material COIs: Mandatory ineligibility/recusal of the examiner(s).
 - Minor COIs: CAB rules on minor COIs and informs the interested parties of its decision. Minor COIs could include COIs based upon perception. Although the USFCA should strive to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, Minor COIs (whether based upon a perception or fact) may not necessarily result in the exclusion or the recusal of an examiner, as long as the Minor COI is managed upfront with complete transparency.

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7. The USFCA/CAB shall adopt a formal COI reporting process as part of its certification process. This allows interested parties to have an open channel of communications with CAB. The COI Policy shall include a COI Form for reporting Minor COIs to CAB.
8. Failure to report COIs may result in the subsequent invalidation of a practical exam, depending on the type of COI and whether the failure to disclose a COI was intentional. The CAB shall establish a procedure to address COIs reported after a practical exam has taken place.
9. Examiners cannot receive gifts (before or after a practical exam) from the candidate or third parties on behalf of the candidate.
10. All examiners and/or adult exam candidates must review this COI Policy at least two weeks before taking a practical exam. If a practical exam is scheduled at the last minute (e.g., at a USFCA clinic), it is the responsibility of the examiners to determine that there are no COIs in connection with the exam. In doubt, examiners are expected to recuse themselves) or contact the CAB to disclose the COI and ask for guidance.
11. One goal of USFCA certification is to encourage the entry of as many members as possible into the certification process. Therefore, COI issues do not apply to the first two levels of certification. However, starting at level 3, COI issues become increasingly predominant. CAB will appoint Level 5 examination boards.
12. The COI Guideline Table, below, identifies the impact of the types of conflict-of-interest relationships on the USFCA's five levels of certification.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINE TABLE

LEGEND:

TERM	MEANING	OUTCOME
NO COI	No Conflict of Interest	Examiner is eligible
M	Material COI	Examiner ineligible- Recusal
TBD	Minor COI	To be resolved by CAB
N/A	Not Applicable	e.g., Only one examiner is needed for the exam

Examiners: This includes examiners conducting the practical exam and also members appointed to a Thesis Board (Level 5). Employment: For COI purposes, employment could be full-time, part-time, occasional, or even volunteer work. An individual may be hired as a contractor (1040) or as an employee (W2).

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Type of Relationship	Parties Involved	Level 1 Screening	Level 2 Assist. Mon.	Level 3 Moniteur	Level 4 Prevot	Level 5 Master
Litigation/dispute	Examiner and candidate are parties to a SAFESPORT dispute/investigation, civil litigation; or a USFCA/USA Fencing ethical complaint.	M	M	M	M	M

Work/Business	Examiner and candidate are parties to a loan/financing, licensing/franchising, real estate, partnership, joint venture agreement.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner has employed the candidate or been employed by the candidate within the last 5 years.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner is in negotiations to employ candidate or be employed by the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner has signed a contract to employ candidate or be employed by candidate within the next 3 months.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner is or has been the candidate's coach.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner and candidate work for the same employer in the same chain of reporting.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner and candidate have co-authored a paper or a book within the last 5 years.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner has worked as a volunteer (minimum 10 hours per week) for Candidate or vice versa.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	TBD	TBD
Work/Business	Employer of candidate employs examiner <i>ad hoc</i> to conduct clinics	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	TBD	TBD

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	and examination at employer's club.					
Work/Business	Examiners who have served as referee assigners or referee examiners of the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Candidates who have served as referee assigners or referee examiners of examiners.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Candidates who have served as a referee or other official at a tournament hosted by examiner.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Examiners who have served as a referee or other official at a tournament hosted by candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Examiner and candidate have or have had a mentor/mentee (or vice versa) relationship.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M

Personal Relationship	Examiner is a relative of the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Personal Relationship	Examiner is or was married to the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Personal Relationship	Examiners and the candidate have or have had an emotional relationship.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Personal Relationship	Two examiners on the same board are related by marriage, family, or an emotional relationship. *For levels 4 and 5, this COI can be waived by candidate.	N/A	N/A	N/A	M*	M*

Additional Information

The following are supporting Addendums to be attached to this document when fully developed by the USFCA Ethics Committee:

1. ***Ethics for Fencing Coaches*** - On-line Core Training Course Description
2. ***Ethics for Leadership*** – Elective Training Course Description
3. ***Ethics Committee Role and Procedures Manual***
4. ***Ethical Non-Compliance Procedures & Reporting***
5. ***Policy for Ethical Treatment of Human Subjects Taking Part in Master's Thesis Research***
6. ***Procedures for Ethics Committee Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Master's Thesis Research***
7. ***USFCA Whistleblower and Anti-Retaliation Policies***

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