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ACS Code of Professional Conduct
Professional Standards Board
Australian Computer Society

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ACS Code of Professional Conduct

Version History

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Approvals

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1.1. PREAMBLE

An essential characteristic of a profession is the need for its members to abide by a code of ethics. For the ACS, this code is established as the Code of Professional Conduct and is part of the Society's **Regulations**. These Regulations apply to any ACS member who works in the field of information and communications technology (ICT).

This Code of Professional Conduct (the Code) identifies six core ethical values and the associated requirements for professional conduct. The Society requires its members to abide by these values, and act with responsibility and integrity in all of their professional dealings.

Complementary to the Code of Professional Conduct is the ACS Code of Professional Practice, which is maintained as a document separate from these Regulations. The Code of Professional Practice is intended as a set of guidelines for acceptable methods of practice within the ICT industry. It is supported by advisory material for specific areas such as project management, software engineering, ICT education, network management, and for addressing the environmental consequences of using ICT.

Relevance To Law

This Code of Professional Conduct has relevance to professional standards legislation. Failure to abide by the Code could be used as grounds for a claim of professional negligence. The Code may be quoted by an expert witness giving an assessment of professional conduct. Failure to observe the Code could also lead to disciplinary action by the ACS.

1.2. THE CODE

As an ACS member you must uphold and advance the honour, dignity and effectiveness of being a professional. This entails, in addition to being a good citizen and acting within the law, your conformance to the following ACS values.

1. *The Primacy of the Public Interest*
   You will place the interests of the public above those of personal, business or sectional interests.

2. *The Enhancement of Quality of Life*
   You will strive to enhance the quality of life of those affected by your work.

3. *Honesty*
   You will be honest in your representation of skills, knowledge, services and products.

4. *Competence*
   You will work competently and diligently for your stakeholders.

5. *Professional Development*
   You will enhance your own professional development, and that of your staff.

6. *Professionalism*
   You will enhance the integrity of the ACS and the respect of its members for each other.

In a situation of conflict between the values, The Primacy of the Public Interest takes precedence over the other values.

This Code of Professional Conduct is aimed specifically at you as an individual practitioner, and is intended as a guideline for your acceptable professional conduct. It is applicable to all ACS members regardless of their role or specific area of expertise in the ICT industry.

The following list of requirements is not exhaustive and should not be read as a complete definition of acceptable professional conduct in all practical situations. The intention of the Code is to illustrate what constitutes professional behaviour. You are expected to take into account the spirit of this Code in order to resolve ambiguous or contentious issues concerning professional conduct. The ACS can help you resolve ethical dilemmas.

1.2.1. The Primacy of the Public Interest

In the context of this Code, the public interest takes precedence over personal, private and sectional interests, and any conflicts should be resolved in favour of the public interest. In your work, you should safeguard the interests of your immediate stakeholders, provided that these interests do not conflict with the duty and loyalty you owe to the public. The public interest is taken to include matters of public health, safety and the environment.

In accordance with this value you will:
a)   identify those potentially impacted by your work and explicitly consider their interests;
b)   raise with stakeholders any potential conflicts between your professional activity and legal or other accepted public requirements;
c)   advise your stakeholders as soon as possible of any conflicts of interest or conscientious objections that you have;
d)   take into consideration the fact that your profession traverses many other professions, and has implications for other social systems and organisations;
e)   endeavour to preserve the integrity, security, continuity and utility of ICT;
f)   respect the intellectual property of others; and
g)   endeavour to preserve the confidentiality and privacy of the information of others.

1.2.2. The Enhancement of Quality of Life

The development of ICT has had a significant impact on our society and way of life. Whilst this impact has been beneficial to a very great extent, like all technologies, ICT has also had some negative effects, and will continue to do so. An ethical approach to your work will help to recognise and minimise these adverse effects. You should promote equal access to the benefits of ICT by all members of society.

In accordance with this value you will:
a)   recognise, in your work, the role that ICT can play to enhance the quality of life of people, particularly the disadvantaged or those with disabilities;
b)   protect and promote the health and safety of those affected by your work;
c)   understand, and give due regard to, the perceptions of those affected by your work; and
d)   attempt to increase the feelings of personal satisfaction, competence, and control of those affected by your work.

1.2.3. Honesty

Do not breach public trust in the profession or the specific trust of your stakeholders. Observance of utmost honesty and integrity must underlie all your professional decisions and actions. Circumstances will undoubtedly arise during the course of your professional career where it may appear to be beneficial for you to be deceptive in some way. This type of behaviour is not acceptable professional conduct.

In accordance with this value you will:
a)   reject, and will not make, any offer of bribery or inducement;
b)   not knowingly mislead a client or potential client as to the suitability of a product or service;
c)   distinguish between your professional and personal opinions and advice;
d)   give realistic estimates for projects under your control;
e)   qualify professional opinions which you know are based on limited knowledge or experience;
f)   give credit for work done by others where credit is due; and
g)   not attempt to enhance your own reputation at the expense of another person's reputation.

1.2.4. Competence

Accept only such work as you believe you are competent to perform, and do not hesitate to obtain additional expertise from appropriately qualified individuals where advisable. You should always be aware of your own limitations and not knowingly imply that you have competence you do not possess. This is distinct from accepting a task of which the successful completion requires expertise additional to your own. You cannot possibly be knowledgeable on all facets of ICT but you should be able to recognise when you need additional expertise and information.

In accordance with this value you will:
a)   endeavour to provide products and services which match the operational and financial needs of your stakeholders;
b)   not misrepresent your skills or knowledge;
c)   make yourself aware of relevant standards and legislation, and act accordingly;
d)   respect and protect your stakeholders' proprietary interests;
e)   advise your stakeholders when you believe a proposed project, product or service is not in their best interest;
f)   accept responsibility for your work; and
g)   respect, and seek when necessary, the professional expertise of colleagues in their areas of competence.

1.2.5. Professional Development

Keep yourself informed of such new technologies, practices and standards as are relevant to your work. Others will expect you to provide special skills and advice; and in order to do so, you must keep your knowledge up-to-date. You should encourage your staff and colleagues to do the same.   Take action to ensure that your hard-won knowledge and experience are passed on in such a way that the recipients not only improve their own effectiveness in their present work but also become keen to advance their capabilities and take on additional responsibilities.

In accordance with this value you will:
a)   continue to upgrade your knowledge and skills;
b)   increase your awareness of issues affecting the profession and its relationship with the public;
c)   encourage your colleagues, employees and students to continue their own professional development; and
d)   support education, training and professional development in ICT that reflects the diverse needs of individual professionals and their various career paths.

1.2.6. Professionalism

The ICT industry is relatively new and characterised by rapid change. It has not had the opportunity to evolve over many years and acquire its own standards and legislation. The ACS is endeavouring to improve public confidence in the ICT industry. It is imperative that members of the Society maintain professional standards that improve and enhance the industry's image, especially in the workplace.
All people have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. Discrimination is unprofessional behaviour, as is any form of harassment. Members should be aware that the ACS can help them resolve ethical dilemmas. It can also provide support for taking appropriate action, including whistle-blowing, if you discover an ACS member engaging in unethical behaviour;

In accordance with this value you will:
a)   take a calm, objective, informed and knowledgeable stance on your professional work, complementing your enthusiasm and engagement in it;
b)   take appropriate action against members who engage in behaviours contrary to this Code;
c)   confront attempts to limit diversity in the workplace, and ensure that opportunities for employment, advancement, remuneration and other working conditions are based on the actual skills and performance of employees, free of stereotypes and prejudices;
d)   note that the corporate actions of the Society are subject to this Code, and you should do whatever you can to ensure that the ACS and its officers meet this obligation;
e)   neither require, nor attempt to influence, any person to take any action which would involve a breach of this Code;
f)   refrain from any conduct or action in your professional role which may tarnish the image of the profession or detract from the good name of the ACS;
g)   endeavour to extend public knowledge and understanding of ICT;
h)   co-operate in advancing ICT by communication with other professionals, students and the public; and
i)   have pride in your profession, and protect and promote professionalism in ICT