

British Computer Society

Code of Conduct

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The British Computer Society sets the professional standards of competence, conduct and ethical practice for computing in the United Kingdom. The Society was incorporated by Royal Charter in July 1984.

Employers, clients, members of the public or other professions should expect, and be encouraged to expect, the same standards of competence and conduct from members of The British Computer Society as they expect from recognised members of any other profession such as doctors, lawyers or architects. Professional Institutions maintain this esteem by two principal means. They set standards of technical capability which their members must satisfy, and they prescribe standards of conduct to which their members must conform or be held accountable for any lapse. Both competence and accountability should be the hallmarks of members of a professional institution. The BCS's contribution to the raising of standards of technical competence in the Information Systems community has been very visible for many years. The Society believes that there should be equal awareness of the accountability of its members not only to possess but to exercise that competence consistently according to high standards of personal integrity. It is for this reason that Council decided not only to have a thorough revision made of the Society's Code of Conduct to ensure that it remains adequate and relevant to contemporary needs, but to give it widespread publicity so that the public at large know what standards to expect of our members. The new Code is the result of much hard work by the Professional Advisory Committee, who are themselves experienced practitioners who will themselves need to live up to the Code, and are also responsible for the work of others from whom they will expect similar standards. It is also the product of consultation both within and beyond the Information Systems community. It therefore deserves recognition on its merits quite apart from the fact that it is now, by resolution of Council, the Code of Conduct which we are all under an obligation to observe.

R J McQuaker
Vice President (Professional)

1 August 1992

Code of Conduct (April 22nd, 1992) Rules of Professional Conduct

As an aid to understanding, these rules have been grouped into the principal duties which all members should endeavour to discharge in pursuing their professional lives.

The Public Interest.

1. Members shall in their professional practice safeguard public health and safety and have regard to protection of the environment.
2. Members shall have due regard to the legitimate rights of third parties.
3. Members shall ensure that within their chosen fields they have knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, regulations and standards and that they comply with such requirements.
4. Members shall in their professional practice have regard to basic human rights and shall avoid any actions that adversely affect such rights.

Duty to Employers and Clients.

5. Members shall carry out work with due care and diligence in accordance with the requirements of the employer or client and shall, if their professional judgement is overruled, indicate the likely consequences.
6. Members shall endeavour to complete work undertaken on time and to budget and shall advise their employer or client as soon as practicable if any overrun is foreseen.
7. Members shall not offer or provide, or receive in return, any inducement for the introduction of business from a client unless there is full prior disclosure of the facts to that client.
8. Members shall not disclose or authorise, to be disclosed, or use for personal gain or to benefit a third party, confidential information acquired in the course of

professional practice, except with prior written permission of the employer or client, or at the direction of a court of law.

9. Members should seek to avoid being put in a position where they may become privy to or party to activities or information concerning activities which would conflict with their responsibilities in 1-4 above.
10. Members shall not misrepresent or withhold information on the capabilities of products, systems or services with which they are concerned or take advantage of the lack of knowledge or inexperience of others.
11. Members shall not, except where specifically so instructed, handle client's monies or place contracts or orders in connection with work on which they are engaged when acting as an independent consultant.
12. Members shall not purport to exercise independent judgement on behalf of a client on any product or service in which they knowingly have any interest, financial or otherwise.

Duty to the Profession.

13. Members shall uphold the reputation of the Profession and shall seek to improve professional standards through participation in their development, use and enforcement, and shall avoid any action which will adversely affect the good standing of the Profession.
14. Members shall in their professional practice seek to advance public knowledge and understanding of computing and information systems and technology and to counter false or misleading statements which are detrimental to the Profession.
15. Members shall encourage and support fellow members in their professional development and, where possible, provide opportunities for the professional development of new entrants to the Profession.
16. Members shall act with integrity towards fellow members and to members of other professions with whom they are concerned in a professional capacity and shall avoid engaging in any activity which is incompatible with professional status.
17. Members shall not make any public statement in their professional capacity unless properly qualified and, where appropriate, authorised to do so, and shall have due regard to the likely consequences of any such statement on others.

Professional Competence and Integrity.

18. Members shall seek to upgrade their professional knowledge and skill and shall maintain awareness of technological developments, procedures and standards which are relevant to their field, and shall encourage their subordinates to do likewise.
19. Members shall seek to conform to recognised good practice including quality standards which are in their judgement relevant, and shall encourage their subordinates to do likewise.
20. Members shall only offer to do work or provide service which is within their professional competence and shall not lay claim to any level of competence which they do not possess, and any professional opinion which they are asked to give shall be objective and reliable.
21. Members shall accept professional responsibility for their work and for the work of subordinates and associates under their direction, and shall not terminate any assignment except for good reason and on reasonable notice.
22. Members shall avoid any situation that may give rise to a conflict of interest between themselves and their client and shall make full and immediate disclosure to the client if any such conflict should occur.

In every civilised society rules of conduct exist for the benefit of Society at large and in order to give freedom for individual members to go about their legitimate business within bounds of behaviour which are accepted and observed by their fellows. In common with professional bodies in other fields, the BCS has formulated its own rules as a Code of Conduct to define the behaviour expected of BCS members in everyday professional life.

Constitutional Authority.

The constitutional authority for the BCS Code of Conduct derives, firstly, from the Royal Charter and, secondly, from formal adoption by Council. In the wording of the Royal Charter, "the objects for which the Society is hereby constituted shall be to promote the study and practice of Computing and to advance knowledge and education therein for the benefit of the public". In furtherance of its objects, the Society is empowered in Clause 3(b) "to establish and maintain a sound ethical foundation for the use of computers, data handling and information technology systems; and to adopt any lawful means conducive to the maintenance of a high standard of professional skill and conduct amongst members of the Society".

Bye-law 18 requires that:

"Every member of the Society shall exercise his professional skill and judgement to the best of his ability and discharge his professional responsibilities with integrity. He shall at all times order his conduct to safeguard the public interest and to the best of his ability uphold the reputation and dignity of the Profession".

In adhering to this Bye-law each member should ensure that he observes at all times the principle that, in any conflict in his professional life between his personal interest and his duty to others, his duty to society must prevail. In amplification of the Bye-law (and without prejudice to its interpretation), each member should order his professional conduct in accordance with the Rules of Professional Conduct set out below: failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action.

By resolution of Council at its meeting held on 22nd April 1992, these Rules of Professional Conduct were adopted by the Society as the BCS Code of Conduct. "

Definitions Bye-law 2; Words importing the masculine gender only, shall include the feminine gender and where the context admits the neuter gender.

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