ACS Code of Professional Ethics

Adopted into the ACS National Regulations (NR4) on 14 March 2023

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1 Preamble

The ACS's commitment is to a community served by an ethical and trustworthy ICT profession, and it strives to protect the public interest. To do this, the ACS seeks to promote the highest standards of ethics and technical knowledge, education and service excellence in its members and the wider profession in the practice of ICT to ensure the community overall benefits from the use of technology.

The use of information and communications technologies (ICT) has transformed society. ICT is used in every field of human endeavour, and its pervasiveness and impact are increasing. ICT is critical to the professions, employment, social interaction, recreation, and to the quality of life.

The competent application of ICT technical skills is necessary for the well-being of contemporary society; therefore the technical knowledge and skills of ICT professionals are important. But the way they are applied is what distinguishes a professional. Professionals are expected to promote good while working within ethical constraints.

While individuals and wider society are dependent on ICT, they may have limited understanding of, or control over, the systems upon which they rely. It is therefore beneficial to the well-being of society that those who plan, build, deploy and maintain these systems act at all times in an ethical and professional manner. As ICT professionals have specialist knowledge and expertise, they have a contingent responsibility for others in society.

ICT professionalism encompasses the values and principles that the profession and society expect from ACS members. This Code provides guidance to help practitioners inform their behaviour within the ICT sphere and enable them to make proactive decisions in complex situations, in the context of a rapidly changing profession.

This Code is based on a set of values and principles that are expected to underpin the professional conduct of ACS members. It establishes just what it is that the ACS values in its members' behaviour, and the role of the ACS in supporting its members in view of the increased complexity and frequency of ethical issues raised in society over ICT developments. This Code, while influenced by legal requirements and informed by society's expectations, goes beyond these to declare our values as they relate to our role in helping shape the society in which we live, and to address behaviours which are aimed at building and maintaining public trust in ICT professionals and the ACS as the professional society for ICT workers.

This Code is not intended to be exhaustive. It does not cover every possible situation that may be faced by members. It does, however, establish fundamental values, standards and supporting material to guide the professional behaviour of ACS members and others working in ICT, both now and in the future, as circumstances and technologies change. Accordingly, members are expected to exercise judgement in every professional situation they face, guided by the ethical values and principles contained in this Code.

This Code has been developed by the ACS Professional Ethics Committee, which has taken account of input from members as well as considering the Codes of other comparable societies. Members may have obligations under other Codes of Ethics, but these should not detract from your obligations under this Code.

2 Values

ICT professionals are expected to practise the core values of honesty, trustworthiness, respect for others, and respect for the profession in alignment with their ICT-based role, context and capabilities.

2.1 Honesty
Honesty is a founding principle for healthy interactions between people and the design and function of ICT systems. As an ACS member, you are expected to:
    a. Be honest, open and truthful in all interactions with employers, employees, clients, stakeholders, and the public.
    b. Not misrepresent any action, situation or capability - of yours, your colleagues, your employer, or others with whom you interact, whether directly, indirectly or by omission.
    c. Not remain silent when you detect unprofessional conduct.

2.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a critical principle in upholding public welfare and human dignity as an ICT professional. As an ACS member, you are expected to:

a. Be accountable for all you undertake. Be prepared to take responsibility for failures as well as successes. Do what you say you are going to do; accept constructive criticism.
b. Practise integrity. Be consistent in your views, words and actions. Declare and manage any conflicts of interest. Do not allow the undue influence of others or bias to prevent you complying with this Code.
c. Be proactive in developing life-long learning practices to stay current with changes to ICT knowledge, skills and professional standards that may impact your ability to perform your role and responsibilities in a trustworthy manner.
d. Respect the privacy, confidentiality and integrity of any personal or proprietary information that comes into your possession, including data relating to individuals or other stakeholders.
e. Communicate your own capabilities clearly when accepting, performing and delivering work, including potential learning and growth gaps that may need to be addressed.
f. Not undertake work for which you do not have the necessary skills and knowledge.
g. Be competent in all that you attempt to undertake. Strive for quality and highlight resource constraints which may affect outcomes.
h. Develop systems which are robust, secure and user-friendly.

2.3 Respect

2.3.1   Respect for Others

Respect for others is an essential principle that underpins the interactions of an ICT professional. As an ACS member, you are expected to minimise harm to any stakeholders from your professional activities and:

a. For unavoidable harm, develop mitigation strategies.
b. Be respectful of the views and opinions of others. Respect their differences and take into account others' points of view.
c. Be impartial and fair and do not discriminate unfairly against people in interpersonal interactions or in the design and function of systems.
d. Model and encourage inclusivity in all your work.
e. Support and contribute to a healthy workplace, that is respectful and supportive of others.
f. Identify and mitigate any risks to others associated with your work.
g. Respect others' intellectual property.

2.3.2   Respect for the Profession

Respect for the Profession is an abiding principle that governs the roles and responsibilities of ICT professionals. As an ACS member, you are expected to:

a. Endeavour to educate the public about the benefits and drawbacks of ICT systems, and how to make considered choices about ICT systems.
b. Contribute to the public discourse on ICT matters affecting the dignity and wellbeing of people and communities within the scope of your ICT role and capabilities.
c. Seek to enhance, in the professional choices you make, the environmental sustainability of ICT systems and the overall quality of life of those affected by them. Ensure that the public interest is defended.
d. Encourage and support advancing the ICT knowledge and competence of others in the Profession.
e. Contribute to advancing ICT capabilities and systems for the greater good.
f. Acknowledge and participate in addressing ICT industry challenges.
g. Support the ongoing development of an open, diverse, and inclusive ICT industry.
h. Leverage collective ICT knowledge and advance the standing and respect afforded to the ICT Profession and the ACS in representing ICT professionals.