

Introduction

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 others.

In common with professional bodies in other fields, the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) has formulated its own rules as a Code of Conduct to define the actions and behaviour expected of RSS Fellows practising in everyday professional life. This code of conduct has been drawn up to reflect the standards of conduct and work expected of all practising statisticians. It is commended of all Fellows of the Society and is mandatory on all Professionally Qualified Fellows as defined in paragraph 1(s) of the Society's Bye-Laws.

Constitutional Authority

The Royal Statistical Society (referred to as 'the Society') is a professional and learned society which, through its members, has an obligation in the public interest to provide the best possible statistical service and advice. In general, the public has no ready means of judging the quality of professional service except from the reputation of the provider. Thus it is essential that the highest standards are maintained by all Fellows whenever they are acting professionally and whatever their level of qualification.

Professional membership of the Society is an assurance of ability and integrity.

The constitutional authority for the RSS Code of Conduct derives firstly from Bye-Laws 24(f) and 8 of the Society and, secondly, formal adoption by Council.

Rules of Professional Conduct

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

The Public Interest

1. Fellows should always be aware of their overriding responsibility to the public good; including public health, safety and environment.
 - a. A Fellow's obligations to employers, clients and the profession can never override this; and Fellows should seek to avoid situations and not enter into undertakings which compromise this responsibility.
 - b. Fellows shall ensure that within their chosen fields they have appropriate knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, regulations, codes and standards and that they comply with such requirements.
 - c. Fellows shall be mindful of the scarcity of resources, promote the optimal use of resources and only support studies that have pre-defined objectives and that are capable of producing useful results.
2. Fellows shall in their professional practice have regard to basic human rights and shall avoid any actions that adversely affect such rights.
 - a. Enquiries involving human subjects should acquire ethical approval as appropriate and, as far as practicable, be based on the freely given informed consent of subjects. The identities of subjects should be avoided in data presentations wherever possible, and be kept confidential unless disclosure is permitted in law or consent for disclosure is explicitly obtained.

Obligation to Employers and Clients

3. Fellows shall carry out work with due care and diligence in accordance with the requirements of the employer or client.
 - a. Fellows should avoid conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, wherever possible; and where this is not possible conflict of interest should always be declared.
 - b. Fellows shall indicate the risks and possible consequences if their professional judgement is overruled.

4. Fellows shall respect any agreements of confidentiality entered into with an employer or client.
 - a. Fellows 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 permission of the employer or client, or at the direction of a court of law
5. Fellows should not allow their name to be attributed to work that they have either not contributed to or which presents their contribution in a misleading way.
 - a. Fellows should ensure that any statistical analysis attributed to them by an employer, client or colleagues is amplified, if necessary, by a description of the way the data were selected, and the way any apparently erroneous data were corrected or rejected. Explicit statements will generally be needed about the assumptions made when selecting a method of analysis and any consequences of the selected approach should be identified. Views or opinions based on general knowledge or belief should be clearly distinguished from views or opinions derived from the statistical analyses being reported.

Obligation to the Profession and the Society

6. Fellows shall uphold the reputation of the Profession and the Society
 - a. Fellows shall avoid engaging in corrupt practice or any activity which is incompatible with their professional status, and shall avoid any action which may adversely affect the good standing of statistical science and statisticians.
 - b. Fellows shall seek to improve professional standards through participation in their development, use and enforcement.
 - c. Fellows shall advocate the value of seeking statistical advice from an appropriately qualified statistician.
 - d. Fellows shall seek to counter false or misleading statements which are detrimental to statistical science, the profession or the Society.
 - e. Fellows 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.
 - f. Fellows shall not speak in the name of the Society, its Council or Committees, without the authorisation of Council.
 - g. Fellows shall avoid condoning professional misconduct of others, and take appropriate action when they are aware of such misconduct.

7. Fellows shall seek to advance knowledge and understanding of statistical science and advocate its use.
 - a. This advocacy of statistical science should extend to employers, clients, colleagues and the general public.
 - b. Fellows shall encourage and support statistical colleagues in their professional development and, where possible, provide coaching, mentoring and opportunities for their development.
8. Fellows shall act with integrity towards fellow statisticians and to members of other professions with whom they collaborate.
 - a. Whilst Fellows of the Society are free to engage in controversy, no Fellow shall cast doubt on the competence of any other professional without good cause.
 - b. Fellows shall respect and acknowledge the intellectual property, and recognise the codes of practice, of other professionals.
9. Fellows shall take personal responsibility for work bearing their name.
 - a. Fellows shall avoid co-authoring work for which they do not wish to take responsibility, and insist on appropriate authorship for their statistical contribution.

Professional Competence and Integrity

10. Fellows shall strive to act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their professional life.
 - a. Fellows 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.
 - b. Fellows shall accept professional responsibility for their work and for the work of colleagues under their direction.
 - c. When called upon to give a professional opinion, Fellows shall do so with objectivity and reliability.
11. Fellows shall undertake continuing professional development (CPD) in accordance with the CPD Policy of the Society in order to maintain or upgrade their professional knowledge and skill and maintain awareness of technical developments, procedures and standards which are relevant to their field, and shall encourage others to do likewise.
12. Fellows shall seek to conform to recognised good practice including quality standards which are in their judgement relevant, and shall encourage others to do likewise.
13. Fellows shall report to the Society any criminal convictions against them in respect of violence, dishonesty or professional misconduct; or upon becoming bankrupt or disqualified as Company Director.

Fellows may seek the support of the Society if they encounter situations which challenge their ability to act professionally.

- a. Fellows acting in private practice, or acting independently of salaried employment, have the right of disengagement in the face of a dilemma involving professional standards or conscience. They may wish to seek advice and support from the Society.
- b. Fellows in salaried employment who are in serious conflict with their employer over a matter of professional standards or conscience should notify the employer in writing of the contentious circumstances. If they are unable to resolve the conflict to their satisfaction, they are advised to refer the matter to the Society, which will advise and take such action as seems appropriate.

Disciplinary Procedures

This code sets out certain basic principles that are intended to help Fellows maintain the highest standards of professional conduct. Should a case arise where a Fellow is believed to have fallen short of the standards required, procedures are defined within the Bye-Laws of the Society which permit the convening of a Disciplinary Sub-Committee. The report of such a Committee will be submitted to the Professional Affairs Committee who will determine what action should be taken in any particular instance. Action will be appropriate to the circumstances, and in the most serious of cases, the sanctions available to the Committee shall include removal of professional status and expulsion from the Society.

Code of Conduct – Abbreviated version

Fellows have an obligation to the Public, to their Employers and Clients, and to the Profession and the Society. In particular they must:

Act in the Public Interest

- have an overriding responsibility to the public good; including public health, safety and environment.
- have regard to basic human rights and avoid any actions that adversely affect such rights.

Fulfil their obligations to Employers and Clients

- carry out work with due care and diligence in accordance with the requirements of the employer or client.
- respect any agreements of confidentiality entered into with an employer or client.
- not allow their name to be attributed to work that they have either not contributed to or which presents their contribution in a misleading way.

Fulfil their obligations to the Profession and the Society

- uphold the reputation of the Profession and the Society
- seek to advance knowledge and understanding of statistical science and advocate its use.
- act with integrity towards fellow statisticians and to members of other professions with whom they collaborate.
- take personal responsibility for work bearing their name.

At all times show Professional Competence and Integrity

- strive to act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of their professional life.
- undertake continuing professional development (CPD) in accordance with the CPD Policy of the Society.
- seek to conform to recognised good practice.
- report to the Society any criminal convictions against them in respect of violence, dishonesty or professional misconduct; or upon becoming bankrupt or disqualified as Company Director.

Fellows may seek the support of the Society if they encounter situations which challenge their ability to act professionally.