

THE ROYAL STATISTICAL SOCIETY

CODE OF CONDUCT

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 their fellows.

In common with professional bodies in other fields, the RSS has formulated its own rules as a Code of Conduct to define the 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 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. Professional membership of the Society is an assurance of ability and integrity. Thus it is essential that the highest standards are maintained by all Fellows whenever they are acting professionally and whatever their level of qualification.

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 which all Fellows should endeavour to discharge in pursuing their professional lives.

The Public Interest

1. Fellows shall ensure that within their chosen fields they have appropriate knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation, regulations

and standards and that they comply with such requirements.

2. Fellows shall in their professional practice have regard to basic human rights and shall avoid any actions that adversely affect such rights. Enquiries involving human subjects should, as far as practicable, be based on the freely given informed consent of subjects. The identities of subjects should be kept confidential unless consent for disclosure is explicitly obtained.

Duty 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 and shall, if their professional judgement is overruled, indicate the likely consequences.

4. 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 written permission of the employer or client, or at the direction of a court of law; Fellows 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 and 2 above.

5. Fellows 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.

6. Fellows should not allow any misleading summary of data to be issued in their name. In particular, a statistical analysis may need to be amplified 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. Views or opinions based on general knowledge or belief should be clearly distinguished from views or opinions derived from the statistical analyses being reported.

Duty to the Profession

7. Fellows 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 Statistics and Statisticians.
8. Fellows shall seek to advance public knowledge and understanding of statistics and to counter false or misleading statements which are detrimental to the Profession.
9. Fellows shall encourage and support fellow members in their professional development and, where possible, provide opportunities for the development of new entrants to the Profession.
10. Fellows shall act with integrity towards fellow statisticians 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 their professional status. Whilst Fellows of the Society are free to engage in controversy, no Fellow shall cast doubt on the professional competence of another without good cause.
11. 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. Fellows shall not speak in the name of the Society, its Council or Committees, without the authorisation of Council.

Professional Competence and Integrity

12. Fellows 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.
13. Fellows 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.
14. 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, and

any professional opinion which they are asked to give shall be objective and reliable.

15. Fellows shall accept professional responsibility for their work and for the work of subordinates and associates under their direction.
16. The Standards of integrity required of a professional statistician should not normally conflict with the interests of a client or employer. Fellows shall aim to avoid any such conflict and shall clearly advise their client of any such potential or actual conflict. If the conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily the public interest and professional standards must be paramount.
17. 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.
18. 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

19. 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 desired, 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.

(Ratified: 7 April 1993)