

Geological Society of Australia



Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Members of the Society

6 May 2016

Preamble to the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for the Geological Society of Australia

The Geological Society of Australia (the Society), as part of its mission to promote all aspects of the geosciences including high standards of profession conduct and ethical standards by practitioners in the field of geosciences, requires Members to practise their profession according to agreed professional ethical standards as a condition of membership, in Australia or elsewhere. This Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct promotes the standing of the geosciences and geoscientists, the well-being of industry, science, the community, and the natural environment, for today and in the future. Membership of the Society signifies understanding of and commitment to the Society's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

The Geological Society of Australia Incorporated acknowledges that the practice of geoscience is a privilege that requires respect for and responsibility to other practitioners, colleagues, clients, employees, contractors and employers, investors and to the general public. The standard required is that of an ordinary reasonable person holding a similar position in the same circumstances.

Members will always show and advocate honesty, integrity, fairness, impartiality, candour, respect and trustworthiness to colleagues, clients, contractors and employees, and to financial and legal authorities, in the course of their professional life.

Members will seek to advance their technical competence and knowledge, to recognize the technical limitations of geoscience, and to recognize their own individual limitations.

Members will always observe their duty of care toward all those with and for whom they practise geoscience.

Members of the Society will seek to adhere to the highest possible standards of professional behaviour, and support equality of professional opportunity.

Members must comply with the Rules of the Society and must not act in a manner that is prejudicial to the interests or Objects of the Society.

Guide to the Operation of the Code

Forms and Ramifications of Ethical Behaviour

Only some of the forms and ramifications of these ethical obligations are explored here. These notes are not intended to be exhaustive in their review of ethical conduct.

Relationships of Members of the Society to Other Members, and to other Geoscientists

1. Members will advocate adherence to this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct among fellow practitioners, and discuss candidly any doubts concerning the ethics of any situation.
2. Members will observe their duty of care towards their colleagues
3. Members will not maliciously harm the good reputation and business of other practitioners.
4. Members will always acknowledge the professional practice of others, and they will reject credit received by them that is rightfully due to others.
5. Members will allow ready access by all interested parties to public, corporate or research data that is not restricted by any valid form of confidentiality.
6. Members will always deal ethically with other practitioners in seeking employment and contracts.
7. Members will promote the ethical dissemination of knowledge amongst all other practitioners.
8. Members will always be receptive to the opinion or advice of other knowledgeable practitioners where such consultation will improve the quality of overall professional practice.
9. Members will be willing to help develop and mentor the knowledge and expertise of more junior or subordinate geoscientists or student geoscientists.
10. Criticism of a fellow practitioner will only be done in a measured, balanced and respectful manner, will be fully substantiated, and will only be done to serve the common interest of geoscience or of the general public.
11. Members will consider honest and balanced criticism and respond in a reasonable way.

Relationships of Members of the Society to Employees, Contractors, Employers or Clients

1. Members will promote the interests of their employees, contractors, employers or clients as far as possible while maintaining their commitment to their ethical standards.
2. Members will accept professional contracts or employment only where their expertise, skills, knowledge and available on-the-job training are sufficient for the task. Otherwise, they will recommend to the client or employer that additional expertise should be sought elsewhere.
3. Members who find that their obligations to their employees, contractors, employers or clients conflict with their ethics will seek to have these objectionable conditions corrected, or will give reasonable consideration to resigning from that work.
4. Members will always respect confidentiality of restricted data or information given to them in the course of their professional practice, and use all information in an objective, balanced and legal manner.

5. In the case of a conflict of interest between clients, employees, contractors, employers, fellow practitioners or the public interest, Members will seek to achieve a balanced and just resolution for all parties concerned.
6. Members will obtain written permission from all relevant parties when accepting any royalty, commission, or patent participation from information gained from any employer or client.
7. Members will reject offers of fees and benefits for referring an employer or client to other practitioners or specialists.
8. Members will always practise their profession with clients and employers and contractors in good faith, and will urge all associates to discharge their duties and obligations.
9. Where the results of a Member's studies yield a result or conclusion that is potentially against the interests or hopes of the client, that conclusion will be reported objectively and appropriately.

Relationships of Members of the Society to the Public

1. All Members of the Society will conduct their professional practice with due regard for the welfare and safety of the broader community, and for the conservation of the natural environment.
2. Members will not make unsubstantiated, excessively sensational, exaggerated or unwarranted statements to the public that might induce participation in unsound enterprises.
3. Members will give balanced consideration to the diverse interests of the broader community in addition to the interests of an employee, contractor, employer or client.
4. Members will not promote (through their reports, maps or other documents, or via the media) those undertakings that they believe are not sound or legitimate.
5. Members' opinions, reports or public statements will be as objective and accurate as possible, and will not intentionally mislead the public to benefit any employees, contractors, employers or clients.
6. Members will ensure that their reports and conclusions draw on the most up-to-date available data, appropriate methods and scientifically logical and justifiable interpretations.
7. Members having or expecting to have benefits or interests in a project or property on which they report will fully declare those benefits or interests.
8. A Member's website, advertising material and business cards will give a balanced and accurate portrayal of his/her skills, expertise and experience.

Relationships of Members of the Society to Legal, Government and Financial Authorities

1. Members will ensure, as far as practically possible, that they understand and comply with all relevant laws and statutory regulations and codes of practice relating to their professional practice for the state and/or country in which that work is undertaken.
2. Members reporting in accord with the Joint Ore Reserves Committee Code and Australian Stock Exchange Regulations will understand and comply with those codes, standards and practices.

Breaches of Ethical Standards

1. The Society regards any breach of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct by a Member as a serious matter, and maintains a process to consider complaints about members' adherence to this Code, with a range of remedies or sanctions (see the document "Procedures and Guidelines for the Administration of Breaches of the Society's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct").
2. A Member of the Society who has evidence that another Member of the Society has breached, in the course of professional work, any element of this Code of Ethics will carefully consider whether the matter is serious enough to justify raising the matter through the Society's Complaints Process. Making this judgement involves a consideration of the gravity of the suspected breach, and of the quality of evidence available.
3. Members who are called upon to provide information or opinion to any investigation or proceedings relating to the Society's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct will do so in an honest, balanced and strictly confidential manner.
4. Where a determination is made by the Society against any Member, all other Members of the Society will respect the decision.