

Code of Ethics & Standards of Conduct

Foreword

The field of information processing has a large impact on society. In turn, society has the right to demand that practitioners in this field act in a manner which recognizes their responsibilities toward society, to demand that the practitioners are of the highest calibre, and to demand that a mechanism exists to protect society from those practitioners who do not, or cannot, live up to these responsibilities. The standards contained in this document, and our agreement to adhere to these standards, is the response of the Canadian Information Processing Society to these rightful demands.

Introduction

This document describes the Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct of the members of the Canadian Information Processing Society, with respect to their professional activities. It should not be construed to deny the existence of other ethical or legal obligations equally imperative, although not specifically mentioned.

First, the general standards and high ideals of the members of CIPS are described in the form of a Code of Ethics. Second, specific rules, the Standards of Conduct, elaborate each element of the Code in a manner which assists determination of whether or not specific activities of an individual violate the Code. They are intended to establish a minimum acceptable level of conduct, below which an individual may be said to be unethical. Third, there is a procedure which details the steps the Society will follow in determining whether or not a violation of the rules has occurred, what disciplinary action is possible, and under what circumstances information will be released.

In total, this document describes the professional behaviour that members of CIPS demand of themselves and their peers. All members agree to live up to these standards when they join the Society, and reaffirm this commitment each time they renew their membership.

The Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct deal with matters that are subject to judgement and are difficult to state absolutely. They contain words such as "authority," "competence," and

"faithful," which must be judged in light of the professional and moral standards in effect at a given time and place. The enforcement procedures require peers to interpret the areas requiring judgement at the specific time of the complaint using the guidelines contained in this document.

Code of Ethics

The following statements are agreed to by all members of CIPS as a condition of membership.

I acknowledge that my position as an information systems professional carries with it certain obligations, and I will take diligent personal responsibility for their discharge.

- **P) To the public:** I will endeavour at all times to protect the public interest . I will strive to promote understanding of information systems and their application. I will not represent myself as an authority on topics in which I lack competence.
- **M) To myself and my profession:** I will guard my competence and effectiveness as a valuable possession. I will work to maintain them despite changing circumstances and requirements. I will demonstrate the highest personal standards of moral responsibilities, character, and integrity when acting in my professional capacity.
- **C) To my colleagues:** I will treat my colleagues with integrity and respect their right to success. I will contribute to the information systems profession to the best of my ability.
- **E) To my employer and/or clients:** I will give conscientious service to further my employer's and/or client's legitimate best interests through management's direction.
- **R) To my employees and contracted staff:** I will observe their obligation to uphold the Code of Ethics of the professional societies to which they belong.
- **S) To my students:** I will provide a scholarly education to my students in a supportive and helpful manner.

Standards of Conduct

The Code of Ethics is a set of ideals to which CIPS members aspire. The Standards of Conduct is intended to be more practicably enforceable.

The following statements are agreed to by all members of CIPS as a condition of membership.

Due to my obligation to the public:

- **P1)** I will not unnecessarily withhold information pertinent to public issues relating to information systems. I will work to enhance the public's understanding of information systems and their current capabilities and limitations
- **P2)** I will not disseminate, nor allow to go unchallenged, false or misleading information I believe is likely to have significant consequences.
- **P3)** I will not offer professional information or advice I know to be misleading, or whose accuracy is beyond my competence to assess.
- **P4)** I will not seek to acquire, through my position or special knowledge, for my own or others' use, information not rightly mine to possess.
- **P5)** I will obey the laws of the applicable jurisdictions, and will not counsel nor assist any person to act in any way contrary to these laws. I will inform appropriate individuals if I become aware of illegal actions.
- **P6)** I will endeavour to enhance public understanding of information systems.

Due to my obligation to myself and my profession:

- **M1)** I will not knowingly allow my competence to fall short of that necessary to reasonably carry out my duties.
- **M2)** I will conduct my professional duties in such a manner as to cause no harm to the stature of the profession.
- **M3)** I will take appropriate action on reasonably certain knowledge of unethical conduct on the part of a colleague.
- **M4)** I will not misrepresent my qualifications, expertise or experience as an information systems professional. I will limit my contributions to my area(s) of expertise.

Due to my obligation to my colleagues:

- **C1)** I will not unnecessarily withhold information pertinent to my work or profession.
- **C2)** I will give full acknowledgement to the work of others.
- **C3)** I will endeavour to share my knowledge and skills with my colleagues to achieve successful results.

Due to my obligation to my employer and my clients:

- **E1)** I will accept responsibility for my work and for meeting commitments. I will inform others with a right and need to know of pertinent parts of my work.

- **E2)** I will not accept work that I do not feel competent to perform or that cannot be completed in an appropriate timeframe to my employer's satisfaction.
- **E3)** I will guard the legitimate confidentiality of my employer's private information.
- **E4)** I will ensure my employer/client is aware of appropriate expertise and current professional knowledge pertinent to the specific task(s) at hand.
- **E5)** I will respect the commercial aspect of my obligation to my employer and/or clients. I will honour all contractual agreements and confidentiality requirements. I will keep confidential my employer's and other companies' information, particularly as regards data and software.
- **E6)** I will not accept work I feel would be unethical or would use resources I know belong to others.
- **E7)** I will avoid conflicts of interest and will give notice of potential conflicts.

Due to my obligations to my students:

- **S1)** I will maintain my knowledge of information systems in those areas in which I teach to a level exceeding curriculum requirements.
- **S2)** I will treat my students as worthy of significant effort on my part.

Enforcement Procedures

The Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct must be supported with clear, orderly, and reasonable enforcement procedures if the Society is to discipline members who violate the Standards of Conduct. Enforcement procedures must be equitable to all parties. They must ensure no actions are taken in an arbitrary or malicious manner.

The Complaint

The complaint must:

- be against a single individual, and
- be in writing, and
- cite the specific clause of the Standards of Conduct that is alleged to have been violated, and

- describe the specific action in question, and
- describe in general terms, the substantial negative effect of that action upon the profession, the Society, a business, or an individual, and
- contain a statement that the specific action of the accused in question is not already or imminently [to the best knowledge of the complainant(s)] the subject of legal proceedings, and
- contain a signed statement that the facts are true to the best knowledge of the complainant(s).

This complaint must be sent to the National President of CIPS. The National President or delegate, will review the complaint to determine if it meets the above criteria. If it does not, it will be returned to the complainant(s) for possible change and re-submission. If the specific action of the accused is (imminently) the subject of legal proceedings, no further action will be taken until those proceedings are concluded. If the complaint is not rejected then, subject to legal advice, the accused member will be notified (by registered mail to last known address), provided with a copy of the complaint, and allowed 30 days to prepare a written rebuttal of the complaint if so desired. The President of the Section the accused belongs to will be notified. The rebuttal should address the same points as the complaint, and must also include a statement that the facts contained in the rebuttal are true to the best knowledge of the accused.

The National President or delegate shall review the complaint and, if available, the rebuttal, to determine if there is sufficient evidence to hold a full hearing. If it is determined that a full hearing is warranted, the full information will be forwarded to a three-member Hearing Committee appointed within 30 days of the receipt of the rebuttal or at the last date allowed for receipt of the rebuttal.

The Hearing Process

The Hearing Committee shall adhere to the following procedure:

The Hearing Committee will attempt to interview, at the expense of CIPS, the complainant(s), and the accused, plus any other parties with relevant information. The number of people interviewed, and the extent of the effort to secure interviews, is a matter of judgement by the Hearing Committee. The Hearing Committee will decide if the accused may be present during the

interviews. If the accused is not allowed to be present during the interviews, the accused shall be provided with notes documenting the substance of the interviews.

The accused will be afforded the opportunity for a full hearing, with the complainant(s) present if desired by the accused.

The Hearing Committee should have the services of legal counsel available as required. The accused, and the complainant (s), may obtain counsel at their own expense, if either or both desire.

The Hearing Committee, after full and complete deliberation, will rule in writing as to the individual case.

Additional rules and procedures shall be established by the Hearing Committee as required in their judgement.

The ruling of the Hearing Committee may be:

1. a clearing of charges, or
2. a warning statement to the accused, or
3. suspension of national and local membership for a specified period of time, or
4. revocation of the current membership of the accused in the Society, and a statement of the accused eligibility for other grades of membership.
5. Such other ruling as the Hearing Committee in its discretion sees fit (e.g.: change letterhead, business cards to delete reference to the I.S.P. status or being a member of CIPS).

The Hearing Committee will prepare an opinion on the particular case, that will cover the facts of the case, the action taken, and the reason for that action. This will be reviewed by the Executive Committee of the National Board of CIPS and by legal counsel at the discretion of the Executive Committee. When approved this opinion will be sent to the accused, who may consider exercising the Appeal Process. Due diligence should be used to provide this opinion to the accused within 120 days of the receipt of the complaint by the Hearing Committee. If this is not possible, a letter should be sent to the National President of CIPS, with copies to the accused and complainant(s), requesting an extension of this limit, and stating the reason for this request.

The Appeal Process

If not satisfied with the ruling of the Hearing Committee, the accused may appeal to the Executive Committee of the National Board of CIPS within 30 days of issuance of the Hearing Committee opinion. If appealed, the following procedure will be used:

The Executive Committee, at its next scheduled meeting, or at a special session, shall review the opinion, and any other information available, and shall determine if:

1. a substantive procedural error has been committed by the Hearing Committee, or
2. substantial new evidence has been produced.

The accused and the complainant are permitted legal counsel at the Executive Committee appeal session.

The Executive Committee shall determine if, in its sole judgement, one of the two above noted criteria have been established, in which case the council shall refer the matter back to the previous or a new Hearing Committee for further proceedings.

The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final: there shall be no further appeal.

Publication and Record Retention

After the Appeal Process and any further proceedings have been exhausted, or after completion of the time allowed to initiate an Appeal Process, the opinion will be published in the appropriate CIPS publication, if the ruling was a suspension or revocation of membership, and will be published at the request of the accused, if the ruling was a clearing of charges or issue of warning statement.

The record of the Hearing Committee and all appropriate supporting documentation will be retained by National for five years. Response to queries may include statistical information that does not reveal detail about a specific complaint, such as the number of complaints processed, provided the approval of the Executive Committee is obtained, or responses may include copies of information previously published.

Any other information may be released only with the written permission of the Executive Committee, the accused, and the accuser(s).