



International Federation of Surveyors
Fédération Internationale des Géomètres
Internationale Vereinigung der Vermessungsingenieure

FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of Professional Conduct



Contents

Preface

Background

Statement of Ethical Principles

The Public Interest

Model Code of Professional Conduct

Orders of Printed Versions

Preface

The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) is a UN -accredited non-government organisation which represents the interests of surveyors throughout the world. Those who belong to its member associations work in government, in the corporate sector and in the private sector, as practitioners, academics or researchers. All seek the highest standards of professional and technical in the delivery of their services.

One consequence of globalisation and the opening up of markets to foreign participation is the need for professional and ethical standards that apply to all. This is to ensure fair competition, to build and retain the confidence of clients, to protect the environment within which we all live, and to respect the interests of third parties.

Whereas cultures, political systems, awareness and understanding of professional practice differ from nation to nation, there are certain fundamental principles that, in the view of FIG, should apply to all. Whilst it is the responsibility of national professional bodies to set local standards for professional conduct, FIG has sought to help its members by preparing the following statement of ethical principles and model code of professional conduct which between identify the key issues that need to be included in any national code.

On behalf of FIG I would like to thank Ken Allred and those colleagues who worked with him on the preparation of this document. Together with the FIG companion publications on constituting professional associations and on continuing professional development, it will help all who practise the disciplines of

surveying to meet the needs of the markets and the communities that they serve.

Professor Peter Dale

President, FIG

Background

1. The surveying profession is recognised globally as one that adheres to fundamental ethical principles.
2. The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) recognises that, due to international differences of culture, language, and legal and social systems, the task of preparing a detailed code of professional conduct must rest with each member association, which also has the responsibility to implement and enforce such a code.
3. FIG also recognises that, given the global mobility of surveyors, it is important to establish common ethical principles and codes of professional conduct. As part of its role in providing guidance and encouraging the harmonisation of standards, FIG offers this model code.
4. A professional is distinguished by certain characteristics including:
 - mastery of a particular intellectual skill, acquired by education and training;
 - acceptance of duties to society in addition to duties to clients and employers;
 - an outlook that is essentially objective; and
 - the rendering of personal service to a high standard of conduct and performance.
5. Professional surveyors recognise that their ethical responsibilities extend to the public, to their clients and employers, to their peers and to their employees. Accordingly they acknowledge the need for integrity, independence, care and competence, and a sense of duty. They uphold and advance these values by:
 - supporting and participating in the continuing development of the surveying profession;
 - serving with honesty and forthrightness and within areas of their competence; and
 - using their expertise for the enhancement of society and the stewardship of resources.
6. FIG recommends that surveyors and associations of surveyors adopt the following ethical principles and model codes of professional conduct or, where appropriate, adapt them to local values and customs.

Ethical Principles

Integrity

Surveyors

- maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity towards those with whom they come into contact, either directly or indirectly; and
- accurately and conscientiously measure, record and interpret all data and offer impartial advice based thereon.

Independence

Surveyors

- diligently and faithfully execute their role according to the law; and
- maintain their objectivity and give their clients and employers unbiased advice, without prejudice or favour either towards or against other organisations or persons.

Care and competence

Surveyors

- maintain their knowledge and skills, keep abreast of developments in their fields of practice and apply their expertise for the benefit of society;
- only take on work that they reasonably believe they will be able to carry out in a professional manner; and
- exercise care in the performance of their duties.

Duty

Surveyors

- maintain confidentiality about the affairs of their current and former clients and employers unless required by law to make disclosures;
- avoid conflicts of interest;
- take environmental concerns into account in their operations and activities;
- recognise the interests of the public when providing services to their clients or employers; and
- conduct their work to the best of their ability, giving due consideration to the rights of all parties.

The Public Interest

1. The first duty of surveyors is normally to their clients or employers but as professionals they also have a duty to the public. Surveyors are fact finders and providers of opinions and advice. It is important that they are diligent, competent, impartial and of unquestionable integrity in ensuring that the information they provide is true and complete and that the opinions and advice that they give are of the highest quality.
2. The work of surveyors has cumulative and long term effects on future generations. Many of the functions of surveyors, even those performed for private clients, are by their nature functions that have a lasting impact on society. Most information becomes public information at some point in time and may be used for purposes other than those for which it was initially intended. The information recorded by early surveyors and explorers has, for example, subsequently been used for the expansion of geographical knowledge and for land development. Similarly, land management systems designed for today create an environment in which future generations will live, work and play. The principles of sustainable development require surveyors to work as much for the future as for the present.
3. Clients, employers and the public must be confident that surveyors have exercised objectivity in

arriving at their professional opinions. These obligations may sometimes appear to be in conflict with the obligations that surveyors owe to their clients, their employers and their peers. Surveyors have a duty to the truth, even when it may not be in the best interest of their clients or employers.

4. All surveyors, whether they be private practitioners, employees in the private sector, public servants or educators, should discharge their professional duties and adhere to ethical principles in accordance with the following model code of professional conduct.

Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

1. In general, surveyors

- exercise unbiased independent professional judgement;
- act competently and do not accept assignments that are outside the scope of their professional competence;
- advance their knowledge and skills by participating in relevant programmes of continuing professional development;
- ensure that they understand the fundamental principles involved when working in new areas of expertise, conducting thorough research and consulting with other experts as appropriate; and
- do not accept assignments that are beyond their resources to complete in a reasonable time and in a professional manner.

2. As employers, surveyors:

- assume responsibility for all work carried out by their professional and non-professional staff;
- assist their employees to achieve their optimum levels of technical or professional advancement;
- ensure that their employees have proper working conditions and equitable remuneration; and
- cultivate in their employees integrity and an understanding of the professional obligations of surveyors to society.

3. When dealing with clients, surveyors:

- avoid any appearance of professional impropriety;
- disclose any potential conflicts of interest, affiliations or prior involvement that could affect the quality of service to be provided;
- avoid associating with any persons or enterprises of doubtful character;
- do not receive remuneration for one project from multiple sources without the knowledge of the parties involved;
- preserve the confidences and regard as privileged all information about their clients' affairs; and
- maintain confidentiality during as well as after the completion of their service.

4. When providing professional services, surveyors:

- seek remuneration commensurate with the technical complexity, level of responsibility and liability for the services rendered;
- make no fraudulent charges for services rendered;
- provide details on the determination of remuneration at the request of their clients; and
- do not sign certificates, reports or plans unless these were prepared and completed under their

personal supervision.

5. As members of a professional association, surveyors:

- do not enter into arrangements that would enable unqualified persons to practise as if they were professionally qualified;
- report any unauthorised practice to the governing body of the profession;
- refuse to advance the application for professional status of any person known to be unqualified by education, experience or character; and
- promote the surveying profession to clients and the public.

6. As business practitioners, surveyors:

- do not make false or misleading statements in advertising or other marketing media;
- do not, either directly or indirectly, act to undermine the reputation or business prospects of other surveyors;
- do not supplant other surveyors under agreement with their clients; and
- do not establish branch offices that purport to be under the direction and management of a responsible professional surveyor unless this is actually the case.

7. As resource managers, surveyors:

- approach environmental concerns with perception, diligence and integrity;
- develop and maintain a reasonable level of understanding of environmental issues and the principles of sustainable development;
- bring any matter of concern relating to the physical environment and sustainable development to the attention of their clients or employers;
- employ the expertise of others when their knowledge and ability are inadequate for addressing specific environmental issues;
- include the costs of environmental protection and remediation among the essential factors used for project evaluation;
- ensure that environmental assessment, planning and management are integrated into projects that are likely to impact on the environment; and
- encourage additional environmental protection when the benefits to society justify the costs.

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