

## Ethical Codes ~ Chapter 4

### Background

In recent years, there has been a notable rise in the emphasis on ethical behavior with businesses and professional organizations. This shift has been driven by a growing awareness among customers, clients and employees who actively seek to associate with organizations that clearly outline their ethical principles. Ethical behavior has become a significant factor in building trust, credibility and long-term relationships. This trend is especially prominent in financial institutions and companies where the general public invests. Ethical investors are increasingly focused on ensuring that their funds are directed towards projects and organizations with well-defined, acceptable ethical goals. To cater to this demand, many organizations now publish explicit ethical statements, making their principles transparent. Profitability alone is no longer the sole measure of success; organizations are now judged by their conduct and how well they adhere to their stated ethical values. The public, investors, clients and employees hold these organizations accountable when they deviate from these principles.

### The Purpose of Ethical Codes

To address the growing demand for ethical clarity, organizations and professional bodies have



developed ethical codes. These codes serve two main functions:-

1 Guidance for members:-

Ethical codes provide a framework for members to understand and uphold ethical standards and expected behaviour. They act as references for decision-making in day-to-day activities, ensuring that individual actions align with the overarching ethical values of the organization.

2 A Contract With Society

Ethical codes serve as declarations of the organization's commitment to society. They outline the principles by which the organization and its members will interact with clients, employees, suppliers, communities and the broader public. This ensures accountability and reinforces the organization's role as a responsible and ethical entity.

Over time these codes have been refined to become comprehensive documents that not only guide individual behaviour but also enhance the ethical culture of the organization as a whole. They are designed to focus the organization's efforts on achieving its goals while honouring its responsibilities to the communities and clients it serves. Ethical codes aim to

↳ Define Accepted Standards of Behavior



↳ Promote high standards of practise  
↳ Provide benchmarks by which members can measure and develop their personal standards

↳ Define the ethical aspirations and identity of the group both internally and in relation to the communities around them

↳ Exhibit a level of maturity to the outside world

### Professions and codes

The Importance of Ethical Codes in Professions  
Like Engineering:

Professions such as engineering, which directly influence the public and entire population, require comprehensive ethical codes to guide members and assure society. History has shown that many ethical failures stem from ethical conflicts or the neglect of ethical considerations.

Examples range from high-profile corruption in construction to smaller, less apparent failures eg insufficient knowledge, underestimation of external factors, carelessness, mistakes, insufficient control, quality issues etc. These causes highlight that most failures involve human or design process errors which are deeply tied to engineering ethics. When engineers fail to meet professional standards, they violate their responsibility.



to employers, the profession and society.  
Understanding the concept of profession=  
The term profession refers to fields requiring specialized training and mastery of advanced knowledge, often governed by a professional institution. All professions share common traits

- Specialized knowledge and skill
- The power to influence society
- Autonomy in practise
- Expertise
- Extensive Training

According to Oxford Shorter Dictionary,  
a profession is a "vocation, a calling"  
demanding advanced learning and a strong  
sense of service beyond immediate  
client

### Professional Qualities

- 1 Integrity — Be truthful
- 2 Independence — free from conflicts
- 3 Impartiality — Avoiding Bias
- 4 Responsibility — Personal Accountability
- 5 Competence — Having knowledge of tasks undertaken
- 6 Discretion —

These qualities combined with personal virtues  
form the foundation of professionalism.



## Role of Engineers as Professionals =

- 1 - Mediator Role (bridge the gap b/w theoretical knowledge and practical application)
- 2 - Independence in decision making (exercises personal judgement, unbiased by employer pressures)
- 3 - Multiple roles (consultants, employees, managers, employers)
- 4 - Professional Autonomy (must make decisions free from financial or market-driven companies)

## Importance of Professional Institutions =

### 1 - Functions of institutions

- ↳ support moral development & responsibility
- ↳ regulate professional practises and ensure standards for training
- ↳ advancing eng knowledge

### 2 - Beyond self-interest

- ↳ focus on community service
- ↳ review codes to ensure ethical practises

### 3 - Ethical Reflection

- ↳ reflect on integrity and ethical responsibility
- ↳ communicate ethical standards to the ~~pub~~ public, fostering trust



## The Professional Code

Purpose Of Ethical Codes =

↳ guide engineers in maintaining integrity and accountability

↳ These codes offer benchmarks for evaluating professional behavior

Expanding Ethical Responsibilities =

↳ Environment (prioritizing ~~eth~~ sustainability and minimizing harm)

↳ Mankind (acting in the interest of global welfare)

↳ Associates (supporting other professionals)

↳ Family and self (maintaining personal ethics and wellbeing)