Week 8: Professional Ethics

OVERVIEW

This session is designed to provide you with an opportunity (1) to review the professional ethics topic (presented in lectures week 7) and, (2) to evaluate ethical situations that IT professionals may encounter.

Note: while the focus is on ethics, the discussions in this tutorial may also include legal issues relating to IP and Privacy. During your exam preparation, you should come back and review this tutorial and the scenarios considered after you have covered that material.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, students will be able to:

1. Describe the ethical responsibilities of IT professional
2. Explain strategies that organisations can use to create an ethical corporate culture
3. Identify and evaluate ethical problems that an IT professional may typically encounter with reference to the relevant professional Codes of Ethics (ACS and ACM/IEEE Software Engineering)
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between what is ethical and what is legal

Preparation for Tutorial

Students should read through:

1. Week 7 ePub
2. Week 7 Lecture notes
3. ACM/IEEE Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice
4. The ACS Code of Ethics (on Moodle)

PART 1:

1. What are four (4) reasons why organisations may be interested in fostering good business ethics?

2. Here are some Information Management Policies that can contribute to an ethical corporate culture:

- Ethical Computer Use Policy
- Information Privacy Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Email Privacy Policy
- Internet Use Policy
- Anti-spam policy

Briefly describe each. Does Monash University have all of these? Find an example of each policy in one or more organisations that you are familiar with.

PART 2: Group Discussions: your tutor will put you into groups to work through the following questions.

1. In your group, examine the ACS Code of Professional Conduct and briefly compare it to the Software Engineering Code of Ethics. How are the two codes similar/different?

2. On Moodle, there are 3 Case Studies, taken from the ACS website:
(Source: Australian Computer Society Ethic Case Studies,

1. Jean the Programmer
2. Max in the State department
3. HCI Consultant

Your tutor will assign your group a case study to discuss.

In your group, review the scenario using the ACS Code of Professional Conduct (linked on Moodle):

1. Identify actual and potential ethical issues in the scenario, arising out of the actions or decisions of individuals within the case study.
2. Analyse the implications of each of those actions/decisions in relation to the ACS Code of Professional Conduct or the Software Engineering Code of Ethics. You should be able to explain in what way the action/decision fails to meet the standard of conduct expected, by referencing specific aspects of the ACS Code of Professional Conduct/Software Engineering Code of Ethics. **Make sure to include how any legal considerations might affect your analysis.**
3. Discuss possible or alternative actions/decisions that individuals in the scenario could take which would be consistent with the standard of conduct specified in the codes of conduct.

When looking at the ethics questions/problems, use the following to see if they help:

- What are the possible choices?
- Is there a right or wrong choice?
- What are possible consequences of each choice?
- Who will be affected by each choice?
- Would I feel guilty because of any of the choices?
- Would any of the choices embarrass me if others found out?
- Do I have an obligation or duty to make a certain choice or to report the situation?
- If there are negative consequences for doing the right thing, how can I face them in a strong, positive way?
- How do the choices relate to the ACS code of conduct?

On the exam, you will be expected to analyse a workplace ethics issue using the ACS code in this same manner. Complete the case study and submit it in your eFolio

Also think about what Information Management Policies, if applied, might have helped prevent this situation arising?

Your tutor will ask your group to present your analysis to the class.