

Code of Conduct

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Institute of Chartered Foresters
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Code of Conduct

Introduction

Professionals stand apart from others because their relationship with both clients and society in general is based on trust. As a professional organisation constituted under a Royal Charter, the Institute sets standards of education, competence and ethics for its members which enables that trust to be maintained. It places a strong emphasis on the integrity and competence of its members, and therefore requires them to conduct themselves in accordance with a Code of Conduct.

The Code should be considered central to the professional life of a forestry or arboriculture professional not only as a source of ethical guidance, but also as a guide to principles of good practice. It is only through the maintenance of high standards by individuals that the public will be protected and the profession as a whole will justify the trust in it and the services it offers.

The Code comprises six standards of professional conduct with guidance to explain how the standards can be upheld.

Application

The Code applies to all members of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, whatever their grade or level of membership.

Scope

The code applies at all times to members' conduct in their work, but will also be taken into consideration where their conduct in other contexts could reasonably be considered to reflect on the profession.

The fact that a course of conduct is not specifically referred to in this Code does not mean that it cannot form the basis of disciplinary proceedings. Members are expected to be guided as much by the spirit of the Code as by its express terms.

Status and Purpose

The Code consists of standards which members are expected to observe in the public interest and in order to build and promote confidence in the work of foresters and arboriculturists and our profession. The Code will be taken into account if a member's conduct is called into question for the purposes of the Institute of Chartered Foresters disciplinary process.

Interpretation

Throughout this Code "client" means the person or organisation with whom the member makes an agreement or contract for the provision of services or the supply of goods, or to whom they have otherwise established a duty of care.

The six Professional and Ethical Standards

- Act with integrity
- Always provide a high standard of service
- Treat others with respect
- Take responsibility
- Act in a way that promotes trust in the profession
- Have regard for sustainability throughout your work

1. Act with integrity

Always put the interests of your clients or others to whom you have a professional responsibility above your own and respect their confidentiality. Always consider the wider interests of society when making your judgments.

Always be honest. Be trustworthy in all that you do – do not deliberately mislead, whether by withholding or distorting information.

2. Always provide a high standard of service

Be open and transparent in your dealings. Share the full facts with your clients, making things as plain and intelligible as possible.

Know and act within your limitations. Be aware of the limits of your competence and do not be tempted to work beyond these. Only commit to what you can deliver.

Be objective at all times. Give clear and appropriate advice. Never let sentiment or other interests cloud your judgment.

Maintain your professional competence in areas relevant to your work. Keep yourself informed of changes affecting the profession and broader developments relevant to your work and ensure your knowledge, skills and techniques are up to date. Apply this knowledge to the benefit of society.

3. Treat others with respect

Treat everyone fairly with courtesy, politeness and respect. Consider cultural sensitivities and business practices.

4. Take responsibility

Be accountable for all your actions. Take full responsibility and do not blame others if things go wrong.

Have the courage to make a stand. Be prepared to act if you suspect a risk to safety or malpractice of any sort.

5. Act in a way that promotes trust in the profession

Set a good example. Remember that both your public and private behaviour could affect your own reputation and that of the Institute and other members.

6. Have regard for sustainability throughout your work

Practice your profession with due regard to sound ecological, social, economic and environmental principles to the advantage of present and future generations.

Legal proceedings

The following notes are intended to clarify the relationship between the Institute of Chartered Foresters disciplinary proceedings and proceedings in a court of law. These are not part of the Code.

Civil Proceedings

The successful bringing of civil proceedings against a member does not automatically constitute grounds for disciplinary proceedings. However, the facts giving rise to a civil suit can result in disciplinary proceedings if they disclose serious professional incompetence or unacceptable professional conduct, for example, by way of a willful disregard of the member's contractual obligations.

Criminal Proceedings

If it is alleged that a member has committed a criminal offence, the courts are the appropriate forum for deciding guilt or innocence and such an allegation will not, in itself, normally be the subject of investigation.

The fact that a member has been acquitted in the courts of a criminal charge does not mean that they may not be disciplined for acts or omissions connected with that charge if those acts or omissions constitute unacceptable professional conduct.

Criminal Convictions

A criminal conviction may be materially relevant to a member's fitness to practice, if, for example:

- it constitutes an offence under legislation directly affecting members of the Institute; or
- it arises directly out of their professional activities; or
- it results in a sentence of imprisonment, whether suspended or not; or
- it constitutes an offence of dishonesty; or
- it is otherwise of a nature which calls into question the member's integrity; or
- it may otherwise undermine the reputation of the profession.

This list is not exhaustive of the offences relevant to a member's fitness to practise.

Employees

In taking on a member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters as an employee, the employer does so in the knowledge that the conduct of that member will be governed by this Code in addition to any duties as an employee.

If the two sets of obligations should conflict for the employed member, they should in the last resort follow this Code or resign their employment.

In the case of an employed member, the more senior the position held, the greater the responsibility to ensure conformity by the employer with the Standards in this Code.

Further Advice

Members in doubt as to how they should act in a particular situation may benefit from impartial advice. The fact that a member has consulted the Institute of Chartered Foresters, or, if the problem has a legal dimension, a lawyer, and acted upon their clear advice, may be of assistance should conduct or competence subsequently be called into question.

All members are expected to observe this Code wherever they work, except and only to the extent that to do so would be inconsistent with local law.