

Assessment of Professional Competence

Ethics Guide

RICS/SCSI Education and
Qualification Standards

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Conduct rules, ethics and professional practice guidance notes

The following guidance notes will help you to have a thorough understanding of the philosophy and application of the ethics, code of conduct and professional practice requirements of RICS/SCSI.

All APC candidates will be tested on this mandatory competence at final assessment interview and must demonstrate the required level of competence in the context of their experience and area of practice.

Ethics can be defined as a set of moral principles extending beyond a formal code of conduct. Willingness to follow these principles was one of the cornerstones for the expansion of the profession. It is one of the main reasons why people choose to rely on members of acknowledged professional bodies.

By following a code of professional ethics, members resolve the inevitable conflicts between the interests of the professional, the client and the community at large.

Membership of RICS/SCSI places upon every member responsibility for the delivery of 'surveying services' within an ethical context and subject to certain core values these underpin all conduct regulations and requirements.

You must demonstrate you are able to operate as a technically skilled practitioner, in a way society expects of those with professional status. Within this competency you will also be expected to demonstrate your understanding of the general principles of law and the legal system as applicable in your country of practice. This is an intrinsic part of surveying practice over and above the more specific areas of law that underpin many of the technical competencies.

The 12 professional and ethical standards are designed to provide help and guidance to surveyors in every situation, particularly when in doubt about how to handle difficult circumstances, or where there is a danger that members' professionalism may be compromised.

SCSI Regulatory Information

Candidates should ensure that they have read and are familiar with information at <https://www.scsi.ie/Regulation/Home> and should also have a good understanding of the SCSI's structure and governance.

The 12 professional and ethical standards

Act honourably

1. Never put your own gain above the welfare of your client or other to whom you have a professional responsibility. Always consider the wider interests of society in your judgments.

Act with integrity

2. Be trustworthy in all that you do – never deliberately mislead, whether by withholding or distorting information.

Be open and transparent in your dealings

3. Share the full facts with your clients, making things as plain and intelligible as possible.

Be accountable for all your actions

4. Take full responsibility for your actions and don't blame others if things go wrong.

Know and act within your limitations

5. Be aware of the limits of your competence and don't be tempted to work beyond these. Never commit to more than you can deliver.

Be objective at all times

6. Give clear and appropriate advice. Never let sentiments or your own interests cloud your judgments.

Always treat others with respect

7. Never discriminate against others.

Set a good example

8. Remember that both your public and private behaviour could affect your own, RICS/SCSI' and other members' reputations.

Have the courage to make a stand

9. Be prepared to act if you suspect a risk to safety or malpractice of any sort.

Comply with relevant laws and regulations

10. Avoid any action, illegal or litigious, that may bring the profession into disrepute.

Avoid conflicts of interest

11. Declare any potential conflicts of interest, personal or professional, to all relevant parties.

Respect confidentiality

12. Maintain the confidentiality of your clients' affairs. Never divulge information to others unless it is necessary.

RICS Ethical Standards

All APC candidates must be aware of both the 12 ethical principles above and also the standards that RICS have in place. RICS require that professionals adhere to 5 global professional and ethical standards:

1. Act with Integrity

Be honest and straightforward in all that you do. This is one of our five professional and ethical standards. This standard includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviours or actions:

- Being trustworthy in all that you do.
- Being open and transparent in the way you work. Sharing appropriate and necessary information with your clients and/or others to conduct business and doing so in a way so they can understand that information.
- Respecting confidential information of your clients and potential clients.
- Don't divulge information to others unless it is appropriate to do so.
- Not taking advantage of a client, a colleague, a third party or anyone to whom you owe a duty of care.
- Not allowing bias, conflict of interest or the undue influence of others to override your professional or business judgements and obligations.
- Making clear to all interested parties where a conflict of interest, or even a potential conflict of interest, arises between you or your employer and your client.
- Not offering or accepting gifts, hospitality or services, which might suggest an improper obligation.
- Acting consistently in the public interest when it comes to making decisions or providing advice.

Some of the key questions that you could ask yourself include:

- What would an independent person think of my actions?
- Would I be happy to read about my actions in the press?
- How would my actions look to SCS/RICS?
- How would my actions look to my peers?
- Do people trust me? If not, why not?
- How often do I question what I do, not just in relation to meeting technical requirements but also in terms of acting professionally and ethically?
- Is this in the interest of my client, or my interest, or the interest of someone else?
- Would I like to be treated in this way if I were a client?
- Do I promote professional and ethical standards in all that I do?
- Do I say, "show me where it says I can't" or do I say, "is this ethical"?

2. Always Provide a High Standard of Service

Always ensure your client, or others to whom you have a professional responsibility, receive the best possible advice, support or performance of the terms of engagement you have agreed to. This standard includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviours or actions:

- Be clear about what service your client wants and the service you are providing.
- Act within your scope of competence. If it appears that services are required outside that scope then be prepared to do something about it, for example, make it known to your client, obtain expert input or consultation, or if it's the case that you are unable to meet the service requirements, explain that you are not best placed to act for the client.
- Be transparent about fees and any other costs or payments such as referral fees or commissions.
- Communicate with your client in a way that will allow them to make informed decisions
- If you use the services of others then ensure that you pay for those services within the timescale agreed.
- Encourage your firm or the organisation you work for to put the fair treatment of clients at the centre of its business culture.

Some of the key questions that you could ask yourself include:

- Do I explain clearly what I promise to do and do I keep to that promise?
- Do I look at ways to improve the service I provide to my clients?
- How can I help my clients better understand the surveying services that I am offering?
- Am I providing a professional service for a professional fee?
- Would the client still employ me if they knew more about me and the workload I have? If not, why not?
- Do I put undue pressure on myself and colleagues (especially junior colleagues) to do more than we actually can?

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

Act in a manner, both in your professional life and private life, to promote you, your firm or the organisation you work for in a professional and positive way. This standard includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviours or actions:

- Promoting what you and the profession stand for – the highest standards globally.
- Understanding that being a professional is more than just about how you behave at work; it's also about how you behave in your private life.
- Understanding how your actions affect others and the environment and, if appropriate, questioning or amending that behaviour.
- Fulfilling your obligations. Doing what you say you will.
- Always trying to meet the spirit of your professional standards and not just the letter of the standards.

Some of the key questions that you could ask yourself include:

- Do my actions promote the profession in the best light possible?
- What is the best way for me to promote trust in myself, my firm and the profession?
- Do I explain and promote the benefits, the checks and balances that exist with the professional services that I provide?

4. Treat others with respect

Treat everyone with courtesy, politeness and respect and consider cultural sensitivities and business practices. This standard includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviours or actions:

- Always being courteous, polite and considerate to clients, potential clients and everyone else you come into contact with.
- Never discriminate against anyone for whatever reason. Always ensure that issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, size, religion, country of origin or disability have no place in the way you deal with other people or do business.
- As much as you are able, encourage the firm or organisation you work for to put the fair and respectful treatment of clients at the centre of its business culture.

Some of the key questions that you could ask yourself include:

- Would I allow my behaviour or the way I make my decisions to be publicly scrutinised? If not, why not? If so, what would the public think?
- Are my personal feelings, views, prejudices or preferences influencing my business decisions?
- How would I feel if somebody treated me this way?
- Do I treat each person as an individual?

5. Take Responsibility

Be accountable for all your actions – don't blame others if things go wrong, and if you suspect something isn't right, be prepared to take action. This standard includes, but is not limited to the following behaviours or actions:

- Always act with skill, care and diligence.
- If someone makes a complaint about something that you have done, then respond in an appropriate and professional manner and aim to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant as far as you can.
- If you think something is not right, be prepared to question it and raise the matter as appropriate with your colleagues, within your firm or the organisation that you work for, with RICS/SCSI or with any other appropriate body or organisation.

Some of the key questions that you could ask yourself include:

- Am I approachable?
- Does my firm or organisation have a clear complaints handling procedure?
- Do I learn from complaints?
- Do I take complaints seriously?
- Am I clear about what the process is within my firm or the organisation that I work for about raising concerns?
- Have I considered asking for advice from RICS/SCSI?

Further Guidance

Candidates should ensure that they refer to the ethics section of the RICS website for further information on RICS ethics standards and guidance.

Dating back to 1895, the Society of Chartered Surveyors www.scsi.ie Ireland is the independent professional body for Chartered Surveyors working and practicing in Ireland.

Working in partnership with RICS, the pre-eminent Chartered professional body for the construction, land and property sectors around the world, the Society and RICS act in the public interest: setting and maintaining the highest standards of competence and integrity among the profession; and providing impartial, authoritative advice on key issues for business, society and governments worldwide.

Advancing standards in construction, land and property, the Chartered Surveyor professional qualification is the world's leading qualification when it comes to professional standards. In a world where more and more people, governments, banks and commercial organisations demand greater certainty of professional standards and ethics, attaining the Chartered Surveyor qualification is the recognised mark of property professionalism.

Members of the profession are typically employed in the construction, land and property markets through private practice, in central and local government, in state agencies, in academic institutions, in business organisations and in non-governmental organisations.

Members' services are diverse and can include offering strategic advice on the economics, valuation, law, technology, finance and management in all aspects of the construction, land and property industry.

All aspects of the profession, from education through to qualification and the continuing maintenance of the highest professional standards are regulated and overseen through the partnership of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland and RICS, in the public interest.

This valuable partnership with RICS enables access to a worldwide network of research, experience and advice.

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