

**THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT CHIEF  
INFORMATION OFFICER**

**PROFESSIONAL ETHICS**

Version : 1.1

**July, 2004**

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| <b>Amendment History</b> |  |                |                 |           |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Change Number            | Revision Description   | Pages Affected | Revision Number | Date      |
| 1                        | The Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) and the IT-related divisions of the Communications and Technology Branch (CTB) of the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (CITB) were merged on 1 July 2004 to form the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The document was reviewed and revised to reflect the changes. |                | 1.1             | July 2004 |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Senior Management Team (SMT) of the then ITSD<sup>1</sup> determined in July 1999 that "Professionalism" is one of the 4 key values of the organisation. To support the value of "Professionalism", colleagues in the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (the OGCIO) are expected to "uphold the highest standards of knowledge, practices and ethics" related to their profession.

"Professional Ethics" is a major component of establishing "Professionalism". To help develop and uphold our "Professionalism", a common understanding of the expected "professional ethics" is essential.

### 1.2 PURPOSE

This document sets out the "professional ethics" to facilitate common understanding among IT professionals in the OGCIO. This document is to serve as a guide, rather than a "standard", for colleagues to make reference to. It is expected that, through this set of professional ethics and the working behavior it induces, the "Professionalism" dimension in the organisation can be upheld, reinforced and further developed.

### 1.3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In preparing this set of Professional Ethics, references have been made to similar documents of the following organisations:

- Association for Computing Machinery (ACM);
- Australian Computer Society (ACS);
- British Computer Society (BCS);
- Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS); and
- International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP).

Due credit is acknowledged to the respective authors of these organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) and the IT-related divisions of the Communications and Technology Branch (CTB) of the Commerce, Industry and Technology Bureau (CITB) were merged on 1 July 2004 to form the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO).

**2. SCOPE**

Basically, the professional ethics in this document apply to staff of the Analyst/Programmer and Computer Operator Grades.

It is also applicable to non-civil service staff working in the OGCIO and performing equivalent functions of the two Grades.

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### 3. REFERENCES

#### 3.1 STANDARDS

Nil

#### 3.2 OTHER REFERENCES

ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, Association for Computing Machinery  
Code of Ethics, Australian Computer Society  
Code of Conduct, British Computer Society  
Code of Ethics, Hong Kong Computer Society  
Ethics of Computing, International Federation for Information Processing

**4. DEFINITIONS AND CONVENTIONS**

4.1 DEFINITIONS

Nil

4.2 CONVENTIONS

Nil

## 5. THE PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The Professional Ethics are grouped under the following headings as recommended by the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP)<sup>2</sup>:-

- a. Respect
- b. Personal Qualities
- c. Information Privacy and Data Integrity
- d. Production and Flow of Information
- e. Attitude Towards Regulations

References have been made to the code of practices of the following organisations in devising the Professional Ethics set out in this document:-

- a. Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)
- b. Australian Computer Society (ACS)
- c. British Computer Society (BCS)
- d. Hong Kong Computer Society (HKCS)
- e. International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP)

The proposed Professional Ethics are as follows:-

### 5.1 RESPECT

1. Be fair and take action not to discriminate.
2. Contribute to society and human well-being and avoid harm to others.
3. Protect and promote public health and safety and have regard to the protection of the environment.
4. Have regard for human rights and avoid any action that adversely affects such rights.
5. Manage personnel and resources to design and build information systems that enhance the quality of life.
6. Respect, and seek when necessary, the professional opinions of colleagues in their areas of competence.

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<sup>2</sup> IFIP is a non-governmental, non-profit umbrella organisation for national societies working in the field of information processing. It was established in 1960 under the auspices of UNESCO as an aftermath of the first World Computer Congress held in Paris in 1959.

## 5.2 PERSONAL QUALITIES

7. Be honest and trustworthy, and do not knowingly engage in or associate with dishonest or fraudulent practices.
8. Continue to upgrade professional knowledge and skills; maintain awareness of technological developments, procedures and standards which are relevant to the field.
9. Only offer to do work or provide a service within one's professional competence, and do not claim any level of competence that is not possessed; give objective and reliable professional opinion when asked.
10. Honour intellectual property rights (including copyrights and patent) and give proper credit where credit is due for work done by others.
11. Accept professional responsibility for work assigned and for the work of subordinates and associates under one's direction, and do not terminate any assignment except with good reason and on reasonable notice.
12. Avoid any situation that may give rise to a conflict of interest, and make full and immediate disclosure to the parties concerned if any conflict should arise.
13. Encourage and support subordinates and new entrants in professional development.
14. Seek to advance public knowledge and understanding of information technology, and counter false or misleading statements that are detrimental to the profession.

## 5.3 INFORMATION PRIVACY AND DATA INTEGRITY

15. Honour confidentiality and respect the privacy of others.
16. Endeavour to preserve the integrity and security of others' information.

#### 5.4 PRODUCTION AND FLOW OF INFORMATION

17. Respect and protect the proprietary interests of the information owners, and do not disclose or authorise to disclose, or use for personal gain, or to benefit a third party, confidential information acquired in the course of professional practice, except with prior written permission of the information owners, or at the direction of a court of law.
18. Do not misrepresent or withhold information on the capabilities of products, systems or services, or take advantage of the lack of knowledge or inexperience of others.
19. Co-operate in advancing information processing by communicating with other professionals and the public, and by contributing to the efforts of professional societies as well as universities, colleges or schools.

#### 5.5 ATTITUDE TOWARDS STANDARDS

20. Uphold the reputation of the profession and seek to improve professional standards through participation in their development, use and enforcement; avoid any action that will adversely affect the good standing of the profession.
21. Seek advice from seniors when faced with an ethical dilemma that cannot be resolved.