

The logo for BOHS, featuring the letters 'BOHS' in a stylized white font on a blue background. The 'O' is a white circle with a blue outline.

British Occupational
Hygiene Society



Code of Ethics

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1. Introduction to the Code of Ethics

One of the main aims of the Society is the promotion of good practice in Occupational Hygiene. The Board has delegated to the Faculty Committees the authority to:

- produce a Code of Ethics for the profession and the specialisms within
- make rules by which the Faculty members must abide
- adjudicate on alleged breaches of the Code of Ethics and associated rules
- recommend to the Board appropriate outcomes where breaches have occurred and supervise the implementation of sanctions, development measures and remedial measures

1.1 The Code of Ethics aims to ensure that at all times Faculty members observe their paramount responsibility to promote the protection of worker health in accordance with the law and best practice. The Board and the Faculty Committees consider that the profession requires standards of conduct, which are as rigorous as those required in other professions such as medicine and law, since the consequences of lapses may be equally serious. They also consider that confidence in Faculty members is vital to:

- the recognition of Occupational Hygiene and specialisms within
- the further development of its application
- the protection and preservation of worker health

1.2. The Code of Ethics should be the primary reference point for members when addressing competing pressures in the exercise of their duties and the discharge of their responsibilities. It outlines over-riding duties which are characteristic of the independence and integrity of a professional. By joining the Faculty, members commit to uphold and be bound by these ethical standards.

1.3 This Code outlines the standards that regulators, clients, employers, other professionals, and members of the general public can expect of a Faculty member. Reference can be made to this Code when determining if there is a question as to whether a Faculty member has conducted themselves in an appropriate manner. Where any person has material grounds for believing that a member of the Faculty has acted in breach of this Code, they should inform BOHS of this breach. In subscribing to the Code of Ethics, members agree to BOHS and the Faculty Committees or its delegates, processing data in pursuit of investigation of any alleged breach of the Code of Ethics, subject to safeguards in accordance with the law. BOHS and the Faculty Committees will act impartially and independently in the processing of any complaint and in the administration of any sanction or subsequent action, in line with published procedures and subject to a right to appeal. Following due process, the relevant Faculty Committee will make recommendations to the Board. The Board has the power to warn, admonish, reprimand, suspend and/or to require professional development or supervision as directed by the relevant Faculty, or expel a member from the Society and to remove the entitlement to postnominal designations. The Board retains the right to publish actions taken against members under this Code and to communicate actions to third parties, where it is required to ensure the effectiveness of sanctions.

1.4 Continued compliance with this Code is a requirement for recognition as a member of the Faculty and postnominal designations. It is mandatory and directly applicable to all Faculty members, irrespective of their membership grade.

1.5 The following sections provide standards for the ethical conduct of BOHS Faculty members as they practise their profession. Risks to health may arise from exposure to chemical, biological and/or physical agents. Occupational hygienists, and specialists in particular aspects, may be employed by a variety of organisations and individuals, or they may be acting as self-employed professionals or be acting in a voluntary or advisory capacity, but there are common principles of conduct with which the Society expects them to comply.

2. General Integrity of Behaviour

Faculty members shall act responsibly to uphold the integrity and dignity of the profession. They must:

- 2.1 Ensure that at all times their primary responsibility is to workers whose health may be at risk.
- 2.2 Avoid any conduct that is likely to cause harm to the health of individuals or groups, discredit the profession or deceive the public.
- 2.3 Avoid unlawful discrimination in their professional activities and be mindful to avoid enabling unfairly discriminatory outcomes in the protection of worker health.
- 2.4 Be honest and transparent in all aspects of their professional practice, including in record-keeping and reporting and in representations about their services, including when they advertise their expertise or services.
- 2.5 Take all reasonable steps to ensure that they do not allow their professional competence to be misrepresented by other parties, including their employer or those who contract them, and to properly represent the competence of those they manage in all circumstances, including the provision of references.
- 2.6 Act to ensure their own compliance with applicable laws and standards and to promote, so far as is possible, the compliance of clients, employers and fellow professionals relating to workplace health and safety.
- 2.7 Recognise and respect the role and expertise of other professionals and work in partnership to promote the most effective outcomes in relation to worker health protection.
- 2.8 Not maliciously or recklessly injure or attempt to injure the professional reputation of another Faculty member. This specifically includes the misuse of the Code of Ethics itself by unjustifiable, malicious or reckless complaints, whether directly or through a third party.
- 2.9 Comply with any specific direction made by the relevant Faculty Committee in relation to the minimum standards of professional ethics.
- 2.10 Work cooperatively with relevant regulatory and professional bodies to promote the highest standards of occupational hygiene and report any breaches of standards to the appropriate body and to BOHS, including any breach they have been party to.
- 2.11 Ensure that they maintain current knowledge and not engage in professional work without ensuring that they are competent to do so, based upon current technical, scientific and professional guidelines and recognised good practice.
- 2.12 Work diligently and conscientiously, recognising the importance of accuracy and consistency for avoiding risks to worker health.

3. Professional Opinions Etc.

Faculty members must:

- 3.1. Base opinions, judgements, interpretations of findings and recommendations on a rigorous and relevant evidence-base, informed by current good practice guidelines, principles and practices.

3.2 Ensure judgements are supported by honest, accurate, transparent and auditable evidence-bases, which are appropriately disclosed in order to justify the basis for decision-making and to inform the decision-making of others.

3.3 Make clear the distinction between objective factual findings and professional opinion.

3.4 Make all reasonable endeavours to ensure that information regarding risks to health and safety are derived from reliable sources and to make reasonable enquiries and checks to ensure that judgements are based on the fullest range of relevant facts available.

3.5 Provide reasoned and proportionate advice by:

- making clear what the health and safety law requires
- exercising professional judgement when deciding what action must be taken in a particular situation
- making clear what choices exist for achieving results and the consequences of choosing between options
- distinguishing clearly between legal requirements and best practice (i.e. 'must do', 'should do' and 'could do')

4. Competence

Faculty members shall perform services only in their areas of competence. They must:

4.1 Only act within the scope of their competence and make reasonable endeavours to assure themselves of the competence of third parties upon whom they rely. Faculty Members should base a judgement of competence upon up-to-date education, training, or independently validated practice in the specific technical fields involved.

4.2 Not address issues of public concern unless they confine themselves strictly to matters they can speak about with authority.

4.3 Keep themselves up-to-date with developments in any field beyond occupational hygiene with which they engage professionally and which may impact on their capability to work effectively as an occupational hygienist.

5. Confidentiality

5.1 Faculty members shall take all reasonable care to maintain the confidentiality of personal data and managerial, technical, commercial or security information obtained as a result of the exercise of their professional functions, subject to the requirements of the law. Such data and information remains in the ownership of the relevant individuals, employers, clients, authorities, etc. Subject to the law, information and data may not be used or released by members unless authorised to do so by the appropriate information owner.

5.2 Where the data or information, obtained as a result of the exercise of professional functions, relates directly to the health and safety of individuals, the same requirement specified in 5.1 applies. Members shall endeavour to ensure that such information is communicated to the individuals concerned by working through the information owners.

5.3 Without prejudice to the need to recognise the duty of confidentiality to the information owner, where this duty is lawfully breached by the Faculty member in the reasonable belief that this is necessary to protect the workforce from imminent and serious risks to health and safety, this shall not be deemed to be a breach of this Code of Ethics.

5.4 Where a member becomes aware of a breach of this Code of Ethics by another member, information about that breach may be communicated to the Society, as a professional body, in order to investigate that breach.

6. Conflicts of Interest

Faculty members shall avoid circumstances where a compromise of professional judgement, or a conflict of interest, might arise. They must:

6.1 Disclose known or potential conflicts of interest promptly to parties who may be affected.

6.2 Not solicit or accept financial or other valuable consideration from any party that is directly or indirectly liable to influence their own or another's professional judgement.

6.3 Not offer any substantial gift, hospitality or other valuable consideration in order to secure work.

6.4 Advise clients or employers when they initially believe a project to improve health and safety is unlikely to be successful.

6.5 Not accept work that is likely to damage Occupational Hygiene as a profession or those to whom they owe an existing legal or ethical duty.

6.6 Consider primarily the health and safety of parties, where they are subject to other professional codes which appear to conflict with this Code of Ethics.