

GOOD PRACTICE FOR FORENSIC PRACTITIONERS

[produced by the IEEGFI]

ETHICAL GOOD CONDUCT GUIDELINES

(Acknowledgement is given to the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners (CRFP) United Kingdom on whose Code of Conduct the guidelines below are based. The CRFP widely consulted and researched the subject across the many specialists within forensic science in designing the code.)

1. Recognise that your overriding duty is to the court and the administration of justice: it is your duty to present your evidence, whether written or oral, in a fair and impartial manner.
2. Act with honesty, integrity, objectivity and impartiality: you will not discriminate on grounds of race, beliefs, gender, language, sexual orientation, social status, age, lifestyle or political persuasion.
3. Comply with the code of conduct of any professional body of which you are a member.
4. Provide expert advice and evidence only within the limits of your professional competence and only when fit to do so.
5. Take appropriate action if you have good grounds for believing there is a situation which may result in a miscarriage of justice.

In all aspects of your work as a provider of expert advice and evidence you must:

6. Take all reasonable steps to maintain and develop your professional competence, taking account of material research and development within the relevant field and practising techniques of quality assurance.
7. Declare to your employer any prior involvement or personal interest which gives, or may give, rise to a conflict of interest, real or perceived; and act in such a case only with their explicit written consent.
8. Take all reasonable steps to ensure access to all available and relevant evidential materials; to establish, so far as is reasonably practicable, whether any may have been compromised before coming into your possession; and to ensure that their integrity and security are maintained whilst in your possession.
9. Accept responsibility for all work done under your supervision, direct or indirect.
10. Conduct all work in accordance with the established principles of your profession, using methods of proven validity and appropriate equipment and materials.
11. Make and retain all contemporaneous, clear and accurate records of the examinations you conduct, your methods and your results, in sufficient detail for another forensic practitioner, competent in the same area of work, to review your work independently.

12. Report clearly, comprehensively and impartially, setting out or stating:
 - a. your terms of reference;
 - b. the material upon which you based your investigation and conclusions;
 - c. summaries of your and your team's work, results and conclusions;
 - d. any ways in which your investigations or conclusions were limited, especially if your access to relevant material was restricted; or if you believe limitations on your time, or on the human, physical or financial resources available to you, have compromised the quality of your work.

13. Reconsider and, if necessary, change your findings, conclusions, opinions or advice in the light of new information or new developments in the relevant field; and take the initiative in informing your client or employer promptly of any such change.

14. Preserve confidentiality unless:
 - a) you are authorised by your employer to disclose something;
 - b) a court or tribunal orders you to disclose something;
 - c) the law obliges you disclose something; or
 - d) your overriding duty to the court and to the administration of justice demands such a disclosure.

15. Preserve legal professional privilege: this may be waived only by the employer. It protects communications, oral and written, between professional legal advisers and their clients; and between those advisers and expert witnesses in connection with the giving of legal advice, or in connection with, or in contemplation of, legal proceedings and for the purposes of those proceedings.