



Institute
and Faculty
of Actuaries

The Actuaries' Code

Guidance to support the principles and
amplifications in the Actuaries' Code

by the Regulation Board

Section 8: Principle 6 – Communication

This Guide imposes no new obligations upon Members or their employers. Rather the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (“the IFoA”) hopes that the Guide will be a useful tool for its Members.

This Guide does not constitute legal advice, nor does it necessarily provide a defence to allegations of Misconduct. While care has been taken to ensure that it is accurate, up to date and useful, the IFoA will not accept any legal liability in relation to its contents.

V1 April 2019

8. PRINCIPLE 6 – COMMUNICATION

General duty to communicate appropriately

8.1 Principle 6 of the Code provides that:

“Members must communicate appropriately.”

8.2 Members are expected to present information in a way that is accurate, impartial and in accordance with relevant professional standards¹ so that users who are relying on that information can both understand the context of the information and be clear about the message being conveyed. Communication is, therefore, a key part of a Member’s role. In order for Members to ensure that their communications (both written and oral) are appropriate, understanding the purpose and nature of their instruction is key.

Judging what is appropriate

8.3 Appropriate communication is very often a matter of putting oneself in the place of the intended audience. For example:

- Is the communication courteous and professional?
- Are recommendations or options to be considered and the implications of each set out clearly?
- Is it clear what you are asking of the user where you are requesting something from them?
- Will they be able to navigate easily to the sections that are most relevant to their needs?
- Will they understand the basis on which estimates and calculations have been made, and the appropriate degree of confidence in the results?
- Above all, is the document fit for purpose, and appropriate for the use to which it is to be put?

Answering these questions requires not just good judgement and a high standard of written communication, but also a degree of imagination and empathy.

Taking responsibility for your work

8.4 Amplification 6.2 requires that Members “*show clearly that they take responsibility for their work*”. It is essential to the trust in which the profession is held that there is clear accountability for any work carried out by Members. It would not be appropriate therefore for communications to users to be presented anonymously, especially where they are likely to influence or be relied upon by the user.

8.5 It may sometimes be the case that the person taking ultimate responsibility for work has not themselves carried out the bulk of the work. In cases like this, the person taking responsibility

¹ Members carrying out work within the UK Geographic Scope should have regard to the FRC’s framework of TASs which sets out some specific requirements in relation to actuarial communication in respect of work deemed to be ‘technical actuarial work’ - <https://frc.org.uk/actuaries/actuarial-policy/technical-actuarial-standards/technical-actuarial-standards-2017>

for the work will need to ensure that they have fully understood what has been done and have carried out any relevant checks before signing the work.

- 8.6 Users are entitled to expect that the Member who has carried out a piece of work is satisfied that the information being provided is suitable and accurate. Members are expected to ensure that they are never knowingly associated with misleading information.

Social and other media

- 8.7 This section details some of the considerations Members may wish to have in mind when using social media. Much of the guidance would however apply equally to Members' communications using other types of media, for example television or the printed press.

- 8.8 When used appropriately social media can be an extremely useful tool which allows Members to communicate quickly and effectively with other Members as well as the wider public. Discussion forums and social networking sites enable Members to reach a larger audience than they might otherwise be able to and are a way for Members to share ideas and develop professional working relationships. While the use of social media is therefore encouraged, its many benefits need to be balanced against the risk that it can sometimes pose to a Member's professional reputation if used inappropriately.

- 8.9 Members can put their professional reputation and membership of the IFoA at risk if they act in a way on social media that is unprofessional or unlawful. This might include (but is not limited to):

- sharing confidential information inappropriately - often there will be legal requirements prohibiting the disclosure of certain personal and sensitive information whether online or otherwise;
- posting inappropriate comments about others (including users and other Members);
- using inappropriate language;
- implicating oneself in unprofessional or unlawful conduct or encouraging others to behave unprofessionally or unlawfully;
- posting comments that are bullying or threatening; and
- posting anything that may be viewed as inappropriately discriminatory or that incites hatred or such discrimination.

- 8.10 Information shared online can be copied and passed on much more quickly than by any other means and potentially to a much wider audience. Once something is published online it is no longer private. What is more, once shared, information published online can remain in the public domain for a very long time. It is important, therefore, that before posting anything online, Members carefully consider the content of what they are posting and how it might be perceived by others.

Communications in personal life

- 8.11 Nothing in this Guidance is intended to discourage Members from communicating through social media, however, it is important to remember that even when posting in personal forums, others may be aware that you are a Member of the IFoA and any information you provide or opinions you express may be judged in that light of that. This is particularly true where you

identify yourself as being a Member in those forums. It is also worth remembering that the publication of information on social media carries the same obligations as for other types of communications and you therefore need to take care not to engage in any conduct online that threatens your ability to comply with your requirements under Code or impact on any of your other professional obligations.

- 8.12 If you are unsure whether something you are considering posting online is appropriate, think about what the impact might be if the information once shared is then disseminated widely. Remember that there can be consequences. It is not only the information that you post directly that has the potential to call into question your professionalism; endorsing someone else's point of view on a public post also has the potential to impact on how others perceive you. If in doubt, it is probably safer not to post than to post something you are unsure about and then regret it later.
- 8.13 When engaging in online discussion, be aware that the views you express may provoke a response; it is important to be open to the opinions of others and to treat others with respect, even if they are disagreeing with your view.