SINGAPORE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

SAC Guidance 01
Guidelines on Code of Ethics

1   Introduction

1.1   A Code of Ethics provides an ethical framework for organisation to manage and demonstrate the accountability of the organisation to their customers and stakeholders. It can serve to clarify the organisational values, principles and demonstrate their standards of professional conduct.

1.2   The Code of Ethics (however named) will not cover every situation that may occur which places the organisation and its employees in potentially compromising situations. It is meant to complement the integrity and impartiality requirements in relevant standards such as ISO 15189, ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17021-1, ISO/IEC 17024, ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/IEC 17043 and ISO/IEC 17065.

2.   Elements of Code of Ethics

2.1   The Code of Ethics should be as comprehensive as necessary, and should cover at least the following aspects:

(a)   Acceptance and Offer of Advantage/Benefit/Gratification

The organisation should not solicit or receive any advantage to any person or organisation. For example, arrangement by a certification body with a consultancy company to offer faster or easier certification will be considered as an inducement under the offer of advantage. Another example is the acceptance of advantage/benefit/gratification by falsifying results for the benefit of the client for compliance to a specification.

(b)   Gift and Entertainment

The organisation should have clear policies for gift and entertainment. Gifts and entertainment should not create an improper advantage for the organisation and its client.

(c)   Confidentiality of information

The organisation should comply with requirements on confidentiality as required by the relevant accreditation standards.

(d)   Conflict of interest

The organisation should have clear policies for its employees to make declaration of any potential conflict of interest that may occur before any services are accepted.

Relationships that may have potential conflict of interest include:

(i) Relationship with a parent organisation
Example: When the accredited certification body offers certification to the parent organisation.

(ii) Relationships with departments within the same organisation
Example: Personnel having multiple responsibilities across different functional departments such as Technical Manager in charge of sales.

(iii) Relationships with clients
Example: When there are any relatives working for the clients bidding for the organisation's tender or quotation.

(iv) Relationships with vendors
Example: When procuring products or services from friends or relatives.

(e) Act honestly and in good faith, due diligence to fulfill work function

The organisation should ensure that all its staff act honestly and conduct their work function in a professional manner. It must be clear that the organisation does not accept falsification of results of testing, inspection, certification or provision of proficiency testing services reports. The organisation should be responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the report and not make any statement that may be considered misleading.

(f) Relationship with Subcontractors or Agents

The organisation should ensure that it has the means to manage their subcontractors or agents. The organisation should note that they are responsible for the actions of their subcontractors or agents that are acting on their behalf as part of the normal commercial activities.

3. Implementation

3.1 The organisation should ensure that the Code of Ethics is accessible, read, understood and adhered by all employees regardless of their roles or positions.

3.2 The Code of Ethics should be periodically reviewed and updated as appropriate.

3.3 The organisation should have procedure for reporting and investigating of violations. The procedure should also include disciplinary actions to be taken and records to be documented. As part of reporting of violations, the organisation should have a whistle blowing procedure. The organisation has to ensure that information received from the whistle blower is kept confidential and investigations are conducted impartially.