



RTPI
Royal Town Planning Institute

Maintaining High Professional Standards

Independent Consultants Network
Conference

15th May 2024

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Professional Institutes and Self Regulation

All professional institutes must **actively** uphold standards to avoid government intervention

- Purpose is to
 - Maintain reputation of Institute
 - Sustain public confidence in the profession
 - Remove opportunity to re-offend

Code of Professional Conduct 2023

Complaints Procedures 2021

Sanctions Guidance 2020

Professional Standards Guidance



Code of Professional Conduct

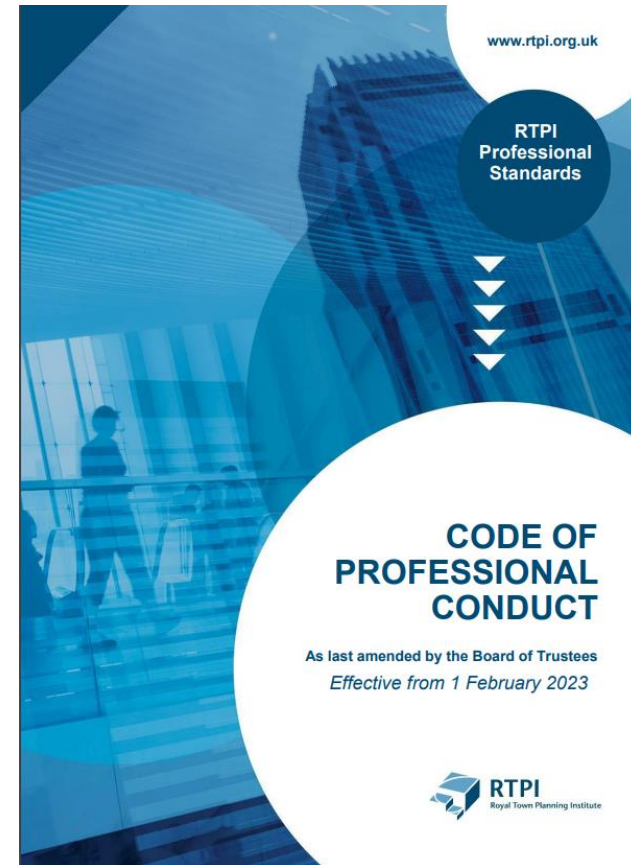
New 2023 version – from 1st February 2023

Cornerstone document and is there to maintain standards, sets out member requirements and is vital for maintaining the integrity of the profession

Five Core Principles:

- Honesty and integrity
- Professional Competence
- Independent professional judgement
- Professional practice and duties
- Professional behaviour and respect

Many detailed requirements in clauses that sit beneath these principles

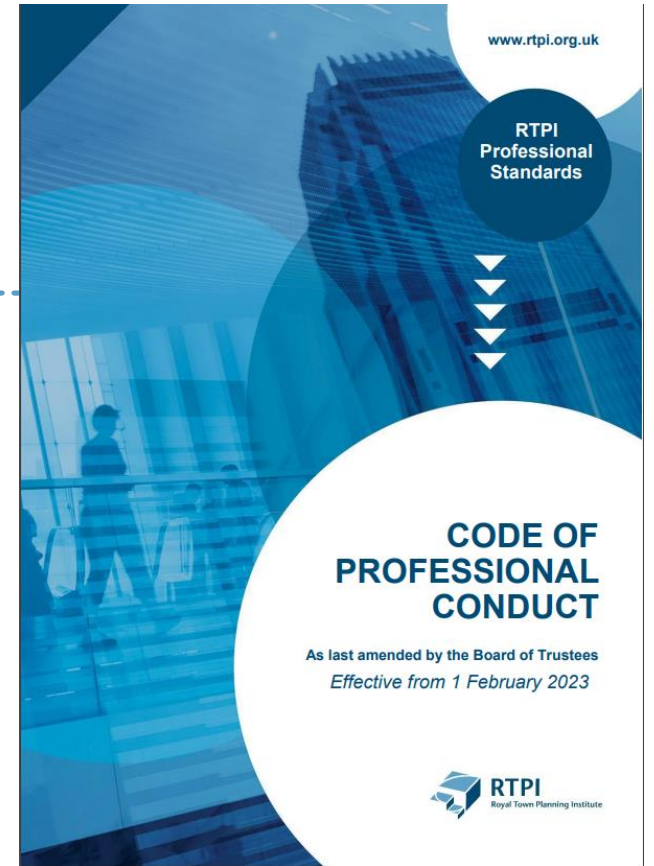


New Clauses and changes of emphasis

Specific new clauses added are:

- Need to apply reasonable standards of skill, knowledge and care
- Advice must be based on relevant reliable and supportable evidence
- Results of data and analysis to be presented clearly and without improper manipulation
- To hold client money safely
- No bullying or harassing behaviours
- Supply and procurement chains are equitable

Many of the original clauses remain



Complaints Procedure

December 2021

- Conduct and Discipline Panel have delegated authority to investigate complaints, to decide whether a breach of the Code has occurred and to apply a sanction to the member
- Appeal available to members found to have breached the Code
- No appeal available to complainants
- RTPI may investigate any matter brought to its attention
- Paper based investigation
- Level of proof is on a balance of probability
- We will normally continue investigation even if complaint is withdrawn
- We will continue if the member resigns



Sanctions Available

- Detailed advice is given in the Sanctions Guidance
- No penalty – may issue letter of advice
- Warning as to future conduct
- Reprimand
- Suspension
- Termination of membership
- In addition, the Panel will decide to whether to name the member in the published report of the decision

- We cannot fine a member or require them to meet conditions but we can make recommendations, particularly with regard to CPD, or to the Membership Team

Where to seek advice?

- Existing Practice Advice Note to be replaced by Professional Standards Guidance Notes
- First 4 about to be published: Introduction to ethics, Conflicts of Interest, Accuracy and Mis-statements, Using Social Media
- Further 4 are in development: Offering Planning Services to the public, Confidentiality, Public Engagement and Consultation, and Professional Opinions
- Future guidance: Giving Evidence at public inquiries, Inclusive Working practices, Gifts and Hospitality, Professional Competence, Criminal Convictions and bringing the Profession into disrepute, and Leadership Ethics.
- Advice is also given by phone or email



Examples of Issues

- Highest number of complaints now relate to accusations of members telling lies and attempting to mislead
 - Differentiating between facts and opinion
 - Checking information where you can
 - If provided by a client then say so, and check it
 - Include all relevant information, and address those issues that might reflect negatively
- Second highest area – Conflicts of Interest and consultant issues
 - When does a client stop being a client?
 - How long to leave when changing jobs and working in the same area?
 - Ensuring that a professional service is provided
 - Overcharging/issuing additional bills above that agreed
- Emerging issues
 - Use of social media
 - Use of AI

What to do if you have an ethical concern

- Think through the issues
- Discuss with a colleague or manager
- Is it covered by a Practice Note?
- Ask for advice
- Document your actions





Any Questions?

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Resources

Code of Professional Conduct 2023: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/membership/professional-standards/code-of-professional-conduct/>

Complaints Procedure: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2569/complaints-procedure-approved-221221.pdf>

Practice Advice: Ethics and Professional Standards:
https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2836/ethics_update_2017.pdf