

Authorising Committee:	Board
Responsible Committee:	Corporate Governance and Risk Committee
Document Code:	CODE OPCEO RANZCP Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct relating to elected office within the College and the employed officers of the College.

Preamble

As detailed in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the College (2001)¹, one of the principal objects for which the College was established was:

To cultivate and maintain high principles and standards of practice and ethics in respect of psychiatry, to promote fair, honourable and proper practice and discourage and suppress malpractice or misconduct therein, to settle doubtful points of practice and questions of professional usage, to protect the honour, good reputation, interests and work of the College.

The purpose of this code is to place before Members of the College a high but attainable standard of professional conduct towards institutions of the College, its Directors and committees and those who hold office within them, and towards the employees of the College. For the purpose of this code, Members should be taken to include Fellows, Affiliates and Associates.

This Code is to be read and understood in conjunction with the RANZCP Code of Ethics, but it extends to issues of conduct and interpersonal relations which are not necessarily covered there. Particular attention is drawn to Principle Ten of the Code of Ethics:

Psychiatrists shall uphold the integrity of the medical profession.

In amplifying this and associated principles, there are some self-evident foundations of enlightened behaviour within the society in which psychiatrists live and practice.

Pre-eminent amongst these is the so-called Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would wish that they would do to you. Another lies in the definition of courtesy as that behaviour which seeks to make another person as comfortable as possible in the prevailing circumstances.

These principles remain a valuable guide, even when the demands of controversy, and the search for truth or prudent policy may modify their expression. It remains possible for a professional person to disagree without being disagreeable, and to respect their own and another person's dignity in the majority of circumstances, if not all. In all contacts with other people in a professional role, the dignity and standing of the profession of psychiatry must be a primary consideration.

¹ The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the College have now been superseded by the RANZCP Constitution (2013)

The Code

Officers of the College

The Members of the College recognise that service on its Board and Committees² involves sacrifice of leisure and practice time, and of income. Election or appointment to any office within the College, or to any of its committees, imposes an obligation to perform the duties of the office in the interests of the College and the profession and confers the privilege of respect, assistance, advice and cooperation from the general Membership.

1 Obligations of office within the College

- 1.1 Any Member elected or appointed to any office within the College is expected to conscientiously perform the reasonable duties of the office.
- 1.2 The College and its board and committees are entitled to the best arguments and opinions that their members can provide. It should be remembered that bi-national meetings involve considerable financial cost to the College Membership.
- 1.3 Members appointed from branches and other College bodies must maintain a balance between representation and collegiality.
 - 1.3.1 In practice, the members are obliged in meetings to state the arguments and opinions of their branch or constituency, when these are known, but
 - 1.3.2 they are equally obliged to hear and contribute argument in meetings, and to apply their best judgement to any question discussed, and
 - 1.3.3 as a consequence, they are free to express their own considered opinion and to vote according to their best judgement, and not according to any instructions from their constituency.
- 1.4 Members appointed from branches and other College bodies are expected to report on the work of the committee to those they represent and to consult them so that their views might contribute to the work of the committee.
- 1.5 Members of College committees must keep in confidence sensitive matters discussed in committee and not communicate confidential matters to those who have no reason to know. Discussion of an individual is always a sensitive matter.

Directors or committee members have an obligation to declare any actual or potential material conflict of interest as soon as he or she becomes aware of it, and to withdraw from the discussion and decisions of any matter on which he or she has a material conflict, unless the Directors or committee members who do not have a conflict have resolved that the Directors or committee member should stay.
- 1.6 Members of College committees must support the resolutions of the committee, even when they find themselves in dissent. An important minority opinion should, however, be communicated to the body to which the committee is required to report.

² 'Committees' in this context includes all RANZCP committees, subcommittees, branches, faculties, sections, special interest groups, networks and working groups.

- 1.7 Any Member accepting the chair of a committee is further expected to:
- 1.7.1 show leadership and guide the work of the body
 - 1.7.2 maintain the focus and direction of meetings
 - 1.7.3 attend more than three quarters of the meetings in any year
 - 1.7.4 recognise financial constraints and keep work within budget.
- 1.8 The usual term of office being two years, a Member elected or appointed to any office is expected to attend a majority of the meetings of the body of which the Fellow is a member in any year of office, unless formally granted leave of absence.
- 1.9 In the event that a Member fails to attend a consecutive majority of meetings spanning more than a quarter of his term of office without appropriate apology or leave of absence, the matter may be referred for action in relation to the relevant College policies and regulations.
- 1.10 If under the necessity of seeking leave of absence for a year or more, the Member shall resign from the position so that it may be filled by the appropriate process of election or appointment.
- 1.11 Behaviour by a Member intended to seriously and repeatedly disrupt or obstruct the deliberations of any committee shall be referred by the chair to the body to which the committee is responsible, whether the Board, or committee.

2 Respect for office within the College

- 2.1 Members who are holders of elected or appointed office within the College are entitled to the maximum of respect, assistance, advice and cooperation in the discharge of their duties.
- 2.2 Members who are the holders of elected or appointed office within the College are entitled to the presumption that they act in good faith and with due care and consideration in the interests of the College and the profession, notwithstanding any measure of disagreement a Fellow or a group of Fellows may have with their actions or statements.
- 2.3 Where Members find themselves in serious disagreement with the policies or actions of those presently in office, they should first make their considered views known to the appropriate officer or College body, with adequate documentation and argument, make use of professional channels of communication, and in the last resort undertake the procedure for requisition of an extraordinary general meeting of the Membership.
- 2.4 If there is strong evidence that the holder of any office within the College is not acting in good faith and with due care and consideration, the matter shall be placed before the responsible body, which may be the Board, or committee. As a last resort, the procedure for requisition of an extraordinary general meeting of the Membership should be undertaken.
- 2.5 Disagreements on matters of theory, diagnosis or treatment should as far as possible be expressed only through professional channels such as meetings, conferences, and journals and not in public or the public media, and opinions in such a controversy should be expressed in academically and professionally acceptable terms, with appropriate data, and must not include attack on the professional integrity or standing of another.

- 2.6 Disagreements on matters of public policy affecting mental health are matters of public interest, and cannot be confined to professional channels. However, views on such matters should be cogently argued with appropriate evidence, expressed respectfully, and without self-promotion or denigration of others.

Staff employed by the College

- 1 All the employees of the College are entitled to the courtesy of all Members of the College.
- 2 Members shall not harass any employee of the College by any means and in any circumstances.
- 3 The employees of the College are entitled to due recognition of their experience and expertise, particularly that resulting from the experience they develop of the special requirements of the profession and the College.
- 4 The College staff are entitled to the presumption that they act with due care and diligence.
- 5 Should there be evidence to the contrary, this should be placed before the Chief Executive Officer or the Board of the College and no individual action shall be taken by a Member on the matter.
- 6 The duty of College staff is the implementation of College policies and decisions. Members should remember that College staff are not responsible for those policies or decisions, and do not deserve criticism or complaint from those who disagree with those policies and decisions.
- 7 If an employee of the College is perceived as acting against the interests of an individual, the College, the specialty, or the profession, the matter should be appropriately documented and placed before the Board via the Chief Executive Officer as an official inquiry or complaint.

REVISION RECORD

Contact:	Callie Kalimniou, Legal Officer		
Date	Version	Approver	Description
17/10/2004	1.0	GC2004/2 R24	New document
27/05/2006	1.1	GC2006/2 R34	Addition of declaration of conflict of interest
16/04/2013	1.2	GRC	Updated to reflect the new College governance structure
05/2014			NEXT REVIEW
