

## **Working Group 9 - Ethics**

**A survey on and a comparative analysis of Codes of Ethics in the worldwide NDT field  
October 2022**

# Introduction

The present analysis is a survey on the kind of content and organization of some (i.e. which could be made available) Codes of Ethics (aka Codes of Conduct) of Societies and Certification Bodies acting in the field of NDT and located all around the world

Since this survey is not focused on highlighting geographical/cultural peculiarities, the analyzed Codes of Ethics are classified (named) Subject A, B, C, ...

**Codes of Conduct:** a code in which organizations (like companies or professional associations) lay down guidelines for responsible behavior of their members

They are often intended as an addition to the requirements of the law



**Professional code:** code of conduct that is formulated by a professional association



**Corporate code:** code of conduct that is formulated by a company

The main adopted concepts are based on ethics for engineers, assuming many points are very similar for and applicable to NDT personnel and activities, as well

# Introduction

Depending on the exact objectives of a Code of Conduct, a distinction can be made between three types of Codes of Conduct:

**Aspirational code:** a code that expresses the moral values of a profession or company. Particularly, it expresses, to the outside world, the kind of values the profession or company is committed to

**Advisory code:** a code of conduct that has the objective to help individual professionals or employees to exercise moral judgments in concrete situations

**Disciplinary code:** a code that has the objective to achieve that the behavior of all professionals or employees meets certain values and norms

The formulation of codes of conduct is only one of the activities that professional associations and companies can undertake to stimulate responsible behavior by their members (others: training sessions on moral dilemmas, discussion groups, ...)

# Subject A



Type of subject: Society on NDT, but not a Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: publication ethics for authors, reviewers, editors and members of editorial panels

Main topics:

- editorial panel/scientific committee: fair play and editorial independence, confidentiality, disclosure and conflicts of interest, responsibility for publication decisions, Involvement and cooperation in investigations
- reviewer: confidentiality, standards of objectivity, acknowledgement of sources, disclosure and conflicts of interest
- author: originality and plagiarism, multiple, duplicate, redundant or concurrent submission/publication, authorship of the manuscript, disclosure and conflicts of interest, acknowledgement of sources, peer review, fundamental errors in published works
- editor/publisher: handling of unethical publishing behavior, access to content

# Subject B



Type of subject: National Society on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: certified NDT personnel and certifying NDT personnel

## Main topics:

- responsibilities: updated knowledge and skills, integrity, honesty, impartiality, loyalty, objectivity, no omissions on reporting. Protection of personal and public safety and health, otherwise inform/decline/break up
- public statements: to give depositions or opinions just based on suitable knowledge, competence and skill and never inspired or paid for by an interested party (unless clearly declared). Confidentiality (for certifying NDT personnel)
- conflict of interests: cases for both certified and certifying NDT personnel
- job applications: to be honest on declaring one's own skills, competences and knowledge
- logo use
- improper conduct and fraudulent exercise: to sign activities without actual technical knowledge or participation/supervision/responsibility. Any infringement of the code of conduct. No association with business or professional practices of a fraudulent or dishonest nature
- faults and sanctions: slight, serious and very serious faults
- certification resign and cancellation
- claims and records

# Subject C

Type of subject: National Society on NDT, but not a Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: aspirational, a collection of moral principles

Scope: members of Subject C

Main topics:

- to uphold the reputation and the dignity of Subject C
- to contribute to the progress of NDT by sharing knowledge and experience
- impartiality, confidentiality, honor and integrity during professional activities
- to avoid to ruin others' professional reputation in the NDT field
- to act in a professional way, protecting health, safety and life of the public
- to encourage and to provide for the professional growth of employees
- to consider their membership in Subject C as affording a distinct opportunity to apply their special talents for the service of mankind

# Subject D



Type of subject: Certification Body, but not a Society on NDT

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: certified NDT personnel

## Main topics:

- general: to be professionally updated, safety for people and things, rightness, honesty, impartiality
- responsibility in professional behavior: reliability in judging NDT outcomes (otherwise inform/decline/break up), to give depositions or opinions just based on suitable knowledge, competence and skill and never inspired or paid for by an interested party (unless clearly declared)
- conflict of interests
- job applications: to get professional jobs just if actually able, competent and skilled, to be honest on declaring one's own skills, competences and knowledge
- improper conduct and fraudulent behavior: to sign activities without actual technical knowledge or participation/supervision/responsibility
- code violation: cases for certification withdrawal

# Subject E – Part 1



Type of subject: National Society on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: aspirational

Scope: members of Subject E

## Main topics:

- to uphold at all times the reputation of Subject E and the dignity of membership therein
- to pursue their professional discipline and activities in a spirit of fairness consistent with the high ideals of personal honor and integrity
- to refrain from associating themselves with any enterprise that would use their names or that of Subject E in any manner countenancing misrepresentation
- to avoid damage directly or indirectly to the professional reputation, prospects, or business of another member of Subject E
- to advertise only in a professional manner, to avoid using improper or questionable methods of soliciting professional work, and to decline any connection with improper patronage
- to inform clients or employers of any business affiliations, interests or connections which might influence their fair judgement
- to treat as confidential their knowledge of any business affairs or technical information of employers, clients or customers and to make no disclosure of such information without their express consent
- to accept financial or other compensation for a particular service from one source only, except with the full knowledge and consent of all interested parties
- to perform their work in the highest professional manner, protecting the life, safety and health of their associates and of the general public
- to contribute to the advancement of nondestructive testing by the interchange of information and experience with others
- to encourage and provide opportunity for professional development and advancement of their employees or those under their supervision
- to consider their membership in Subject E as affording a distinct opportunity to apply their special talents for the service of mankind
- to refrain from any statements or acts which constitute hostile behavior and any forms of intimidation or harassment of any kind by and between members whether sexual, racial ethnic or religious origin



# Subject E – Part 2



Type of subject: National Society on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: certified NDT personnel at Level 3

## Main topics:

- integrity, honesty, impartiality, devotion
- responsibilities to the public: protect the safety, health, and welfare of the public (otherwise inform/decline/break up). Be completely objective in any professional report, statement, or testimony, avoiding any omission. Undertake to perform assignments only when qualified by training and experience in the specific technical fields involved. Express an opinion as a technical witness before any court, commission, or other tribunal, only when such opinion is founded
- public statements: to give depositions or opinions just based on suitable knowledge, competence and skill and never inspired or paid for by an interested party (unless clearly declared)
- conflict of interest
- solicitation of employment: to get professional jobs just if actually able, competent and skilled, to be honest on declaring one's own skills, competences and knowledge. No bribery or corruption
- improper conduct: to sign activities without actual technical knowledge or participation/supervision/responsibility. No association with business or professional practices of a fraudulent or dishonest nature
- unauthorized practice: any violation of this code shall be deemed to be an unauthorized practice
- rulings of Other Jurisdictions

# Subject E – Part 3



Type of subject: National Society on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Subject E provides also:

1. a procedure on “ethics violations” (guidelines regarding complaints resulting from alleged violations of the Code of Ethics for Nondestructive Testing Personnel certified by Subject E)
2. a procedure on “appeals, complaints and dispute policy” (guidance for fair notice and hearings when a complaint, dispute, appeal or request for information, is filed against Subject E related to any activity involving the certification or application/testing for certification of any individual in accordance with Subject E offered certification programs)

# Subject F – Part 1



Type of subject: Professional Institute on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly aspirational, a bit of disciplinary

Scope: individual members of Subject F

Main topics:

- to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct, including openness, fairness, honesty and integrity
- respect for life, law, the environment and public good: to obey all applicable laws and regulations and give due weight to facts, published standards and guidance in the wider public interest
- accuracy and rigour
- leadership and communication: to abide by and promote high standards of leadership and communication

Any failure to do so can be dealt with by expulsion from Subject F membership and consequent loss of professional registration, if applicable

# Subject F – Part 2



Type of subject: Professional Institute on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: corporate members of Subject F

## Main topics:

- members must only accept tasks for which they possess, or have access to, the necessary competence and organization. each task must be accomplished solely in the legitimate interests of the client, and must be performed with all reasonable skill, care and diligence
- members shall discharge their duties with complete fidelity. they must not disclose, without their client's authority, business or technical information of a confidential nature
- no member shall act so as to injure, or attempt to injure, whether directly or indirectly, the professional reputation and prospects or business of another member organisation
- members must refrain from enticing or coercing staff of client's or other member organisations to leave and enter their own service
- members shall be entitled to promote their business, but shall not make exaggerated or unjustified claims
- for every task members must inform the client of any direct or indirect connection with the contractor, fabricator, manufacturer, supplier or other commercial interest which might make their professional impartiality suspect
- members must respect the personal and professional dignity of employees, colleagues and other persons
- members must respectfully apply the laws, regulations, technical rules and accepted professional standards and must not accept contracts or instructions incompatible with such rules

# Subject F – Part 3

Type of subject: Professional Institute on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: NDT personnel certified by Subject F

## Main topics:

- to apply themselves correctly and to maintain high levels of integrity, honesty, skill and proficiency in the conducting of NDT
- to undertake only those non-destructive testing assignments for which they are competent
- to perform all inspections to the best of one's ability at all times and to resist any outside pressures
- to sign documents for work of which they have personal professional knowledge and/or direct supervisory control
- to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and utilize fair and equitable business practices in dealing with colleagues, clients and associates
- to report immediately to their supervisor/employer any perceived violation(s) of codes, regulations or standards
- to perform their professional duties with proper regard for the physical environment and the safety, health and well-being of the public
- to protect to the fullest extent possible, consistent with the well being of the public and the provisions of this code of ethics, any information given to them in confidence by an employer, colleague or member of the public
- to avoid conflicts of interest with the employer or client, but when unavoidable, forthwith disclose the circumstances to the employer or client
- to strive to maintain their proficiency by updating their technical knowledge as required to properly practice NDT in the certified methods and levels
- to indicate to the employer or client any adverse consequences which may result from an overruling of their technical judgment by a non-technical authority
- to not falsify nor permit misrepresentation of their own or their associate's academic or professional qualifications,
- to report immediately to Subject F any perceived or known fraud, violations, pressure
- to inform the employer in the event that the certificate is suspended, cancelled or withdrawn

# Subject G

Type of subject: National Society on NDT and Certification Body

Type of code of conduct: mainly disciplinary, a bit of aspirational

Scope: members of the working groups established within Subject G

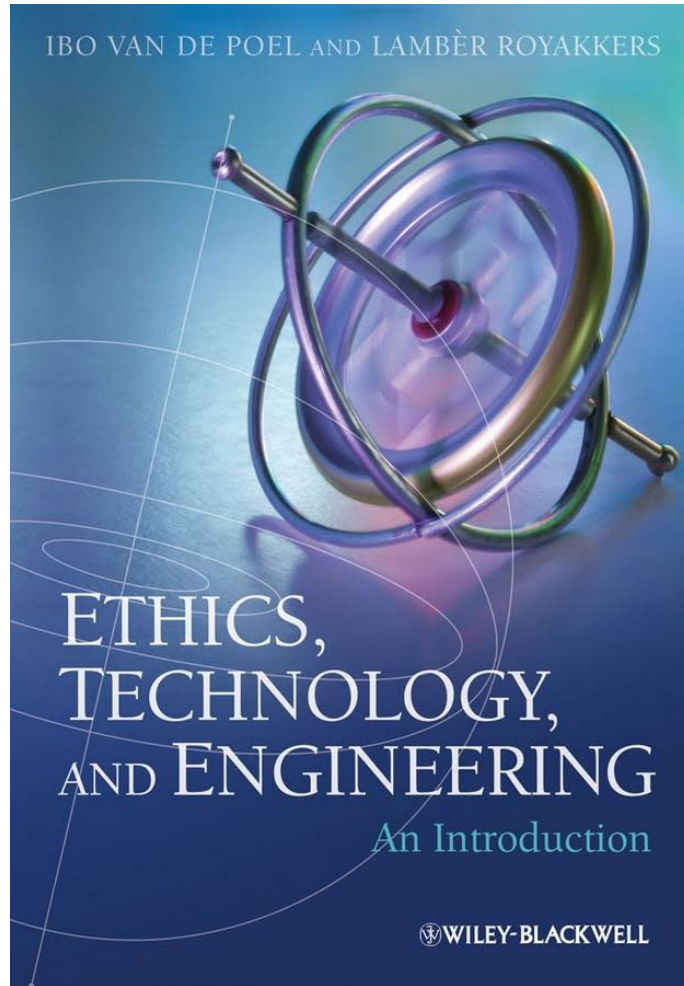
## Main topics:

- Members must act in the interest of the Subject G Committees or Working Groups in which they participate and in compliance with the legislative and regulatory obligations in force. Unless specifically mandated, they do not speak on behalf of Subject G, and do not represent it
- Members must fully understand their rights and obligations, and in particular Subject G's own rules, as they result from its statutes, its internal regulations, as well as the legislative and regulatory texts in force organizing the activity of Subject G
- Members carry out their missions with regularity, independence, loyalty, integrity and professionalism
- Members shall ensure that their independence of judgment, decision and action is preserved in all circumstances
- Members undertake to exercise good judgment in the disclosure of the content of the debates that take place within the framework of their missions. They provide Subject G with the information they may have, and make any suggestions likely to help Subject G in its activities and development. They have a duty to clearly express their opinions. In the event of a persistent disagreement, they ensure that these are explicitly recorded in the minutes of the deliberations of the Committees or Groups in which they participate
- Members draw up a declaration of interests according to the internal rules of Subject G. Members finding themselves, or at risk of finding themselves, in a conflict between their moral and material interests and those of Subject G shall immediately inform the President concerned. In this case, they will refrain from participating in debates and decisions on the matters in question
- Members participate in the work of the Committees or Working Groups of which they are members, with regularity and diligence. They strive to obtain in the appropriate timeframes the elements that they consider essential for their information in order to deliberate within Committees or Working Groups in full knowledge of the facts
- Members contribute to the collegiality and efficiency of the work of the Committees or Working Groups in which they participate
- Each member undertakes to respect in good faith the provisions of this document. Failure to do so, he submits his resignation

# Conclusions

1. more codes of conduct should be gathered and analyzed
2. generally, the topics/concepts considered by the analyzed codes seem to be appropriated and well aligned to the suggestions provided in the literature on codes of conduct. Maybe, some points could be still improved and completed (help by experts is needed here) because the feeling is that the best and optimized status is not yet achieved. The level of details of the considered codes of conduct is, sometimes, very different, i.e. some codes are much more detailed and “strict” than others
3. actually, many of the analyzed codes of conduct are structurally very similar: their tables of contents and main topics/concepts are, sometimes, almost superimposable (in a few cases, some specific parts of the considered texts were even identical). This seems to suggest some kind of “copy and paste” procedure, even if with different levels of summarization (see the discussion on the level of details at point 2). This is not necessarily objectionable, but highlights a lack of thinking contribution to the topic by a number of actors who were just “inspired” by the work previously done by others without the likely addition of new and fresh ideas. A more active participation could help to improve the progress of ethics or, at least, of the writing of effective codes of conduct in the NDT field (this could be one of the future developments/actions of the WG)

Most of the adopted concepts are taken from:



Actually, this is specifically focused on professional engineering, but it can be easily transferred to NDT (technical) activities

**EF** European Federation for  
Non-Destructive Testing  
**NDT**