

# **Why Ethics Standards are of Limited use on Their Own for Professionals Working in Land, Property and Construction - and if to be Effective How Such Standards Need to be Embedded, Monitored and Regulated Against by Professional Bodies.**

**Workshop with real life case studies.**

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**Key words:** Standards, Risk Management, Professional Practice, International Ethical Standards (IES), Trust, Client and Public Protection, Implementation, Regulation.

## **SUMMARY**

In 2015 I delivered a paper which explored the opportunities and very real benefits that could be afforded not only to professionals working in land, property and construction surveying but also to clients, the public and society more generally by the setting, promotion and monitoring of international standards on ethics.

Trust between businesses and society is still at a low point and there is a real danger that focusing on targets and regulations can drive dysfunctional and unethical behaviour.

However, a code of ethics on its own is potentially of limited use and this paper takes the subject further focusing on the following issues:

- Is just having ethics standards enough? – do you produce standards and leave it at that?
- Will that really get buy in?
- What does adoption look like and what are the risks to an organisations or country's reputation if people just pay lip service?
- An update on the work that has been undertaken in the last year by the International Ethics Standards (IES) coalition and the increasing interest in this project from varying organisations, stakeholders and governments inc the UN and World Bank. The IES were published in Dec 2016, and all 100+ members of the Coalition (inc FIG) are committed to adopting into their own organisations.
- The challenges the FIG faces in coming to terms with the varying global definitions of what is ethical, how the various members will be challenged to implement IES.
- How FIG Commission 1 intend to provide guidance across our many diverse types of members working in different fields of surveying.
- How are FIG intending to get the message across to members across the world and how we are looking to embed ethics standards into our constituent professional bodies membership requirements, training and (critically) regulation.

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- Should compliance with ethics standards be reactive or proactively measured?

Ethical behaviours by professionals is critical to both business, consumers and society in general but what more needs to be done to continue trying to change what for many is 'normal business practice'.

We intend in FIG Commission 1 to build on the growing interest generated in KL in 2014, Sofia in 2015, New Zealand in 2016, and the International Ethics Standards Coalition of over 100 professional bodies globally who have now come together on this topic, to hold a workshop in Helsinki to hear updates from countries and their representatives about real life examples of ethical issues they face as surveyors in their geographies. Please register for the event, and come prepared to discuss your case examples.

This insight will help the FIG Commission 1 Working Group shape the new FIG Ethics Code which will be a major feature of the workplan for 2014-18 as it will be based on the International Ethics Standard now published in late 2016.

Gary Strong  
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## **APPENDIX 1**

Case study examples;

1. A surveyor is appointed by the insurance company to investigate & report on damage to a property. The sum offered by the surveyor does not represent the full value of reinstatement – as it is in the interests of the insurers (the surveyor's client) to pay as little as possible.
2. A surveyor reports that the boundaries to the land are not fixed and under dispute – but he argues strenuously on behalf of his client that the boundaries are correct to maximize his clients advantage.
3. A surveyor obtaining tenders for construction works knows one of the tenderers – a family connection. This firm are the lowest tenderer, but by a very small margin. The surveyor knows they have not priced some elements of the work correctly.
4. A surveyor is appointed as an expert witness in a case going to court. He presents evidence as an advocate rather than as a truly independent expert.
5. A surveyor is acting as introducer for the sale of a large warehouse – he introduces several prospective purchasers to the owner. It turns out the surveyor is also acting for the seller.

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6. A surveyor is acting for one party in a contentious rent review of a shop. He knows the surveyor who has dealt with rent reviews on a similar parade of shops nearby. He asks this surveyor to let him have the transaction details of the rent reviews of this other parade of shops, but the other surveyor does not know what to do – it could compromise his clients' confidentiality.
7. A surveyor is contacted for a fee quote on a job in another country. Coincidentally, he knows the fee another surveyor quoted. He decides to use this information to undercut the other surveyor's fee as he would quite like to visit that country

## **APPENDIX 2**

International Ethics Standards (IES)



International Ethics  
Standards (final).pdf

[click on the icon above to launch the pdf](#)

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